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BRITISH STATESMEN OF THE  
GREAT WAR

1793-1814

HENRY FROWDE, M.A.  
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# BRITISH STATESMEN OF THE GREAT WAR

1793-1814

THE FORD LECTURES FOR 1911

BY  
*John William*  
J. W. FORTESCUE

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## LECTURE I

FOR the last four years a pleasant duty has led me to traverse weekly—I might almost say daily—a gallery hung with portraits of the principal actors upon the great stage of Europe at the time of the Congress of Vienna. There is Francis, last Emperor of the Holy Roman Empire, and first Emperor of Austria, white-haired and benevolent, sitting (not perhaps without covert satire of the artist) in an uneasy attitude upon a throne too big for him. There is his far greater brother, the Archduke Charles, standing erect with the air of one who finds the world too hard. There is Schwarzenberg, huge and heavy, attempting to wear the aspect of a great commander; and there is Metternich, alert and easy, ready to lie to the world, and inclined to laugh at it. Coming next to Prussia, there are King Frederick William the Third, a mere melancholy body in a tight uniform; Blücher, fiery and impetuous but not intellectual; and Hardenberg, in his white wig, blandly smirking like the trusted physician of a respectable family. Over against Frederick William stands Alexander of Russia, bald, bashful, and plump, his body straining every seam of his military dress, and his countenance overflowing suspiciously with gentleness and peace. Near him sits Nesselrode, to all outward seeming a prosperous and sentimental man of letters. There, too, is seated Pope Pius the Seventh, his slight frail form sunk deep into a chair,

but his little, keen face beaming with subtilty. Over against him, in all the mild dignity of a prince of the Church, sits Cardinal Consalvi. Lastly, we come to our own countrymen. First there is the old King George the Third, tall, gaunt, and ungraceful, even in the beautiful robes of the Garter, with his sharply receding forehead, and the prominent blue eyes, which seem always so pathetically troubled and perplexed. Still one feels, as one sees him, that the man is greater than his clothes. It is otherwise with the Regent, who hangs next to the King. There an onlooker is sensible that the clothes are greater than the man. Next to his brother stands Frederick, Duke of York, his once handsome face coarsened by loose living, but honest and not without character. Then come the King's Ministers. There is Liverpool, clad in sober black, with the painful, anxious expression that so often marks the earnest Evangelical parson. There is Castlereagh, the ideal figure of a great nobleman, strikingly handsome, easy and dignified, with shrewd sense and insight shining in his eyes, and courage and resolution playing about his lips. Not far from him hangs the embodiment of self-consciousness, a lean, bald-headed man with folded arms and lowering, mysterious brow, George Canning, posing to posterity as he had posed to his contemporaries. Lastly there is Wellington, in the prime of his life, erect and black-haired, bearing the sword of state as he bore it at St. Paul's when the nation made thanksgiving for the return of peace.

These are the men who, so to speak, attended the obsequies of the Revolution Militant. It is worth while to note how young they were. Two of them alone, the Pope and Blücher, were veterans of seventy-two; and



one more only even approached them in age, namely, Hardenberg, who was sixty-four. Of the others, if we set aside George the Third, who was sunk in hopeless insanity, the Prince Regent was fifty-two, the Duke of York fifty-one, and the whole of the remainder under fifty. The Emperor Francis was forty-six, Castlereagh and Wellington forty-five; King Frederick William, Lord Liverpool, and Canning, forty-four; the Archduke Charles and Schwarzenberg, forty-three; Metternich forty-two; the Emperor Alexander, thirty-seven; and Nesselrode, thirty-eight. If we add the name of the representative of France at the Congress, Talleyrand was sixty; but the greatest name of all again lowers the level of age, for Napoleon himself was only forty-six. Yet the French Revolution, dating as is usual from the fall of the Bastille, was a quarter of a century old, and the war of the French Revolution had endured for twenty-two years. In fact, of the men who stood over the grave of the Revolution Militant, it may be said that one only had known it intimately from its cradle—Talleyrand. Europe had hunted it to death, if a metaphor may be borrowed from the chase, only by hunting it with relays; and the hounds that had first been slipped had dropped off one by one, discouraged, exhausted, or dead.

Now it is the rule in human history that the players in the final scene of a great drama are better remembered than those who have borne the burden and stress of the previous acts. We associate the triumph of Rome over Carthage with Scipio Africanus, and the subjection of Lewis the Fourteenth with Marlborough. I am far from belittling either of these great men, least of all Marlborough, who was a great statesman as well

as a great soldier ; but we must also bear in mind the names of Fabius and of William the Third.

In the case of the Revolution Militant, however, there is a tendency to transgress this rule. We in England do indeed associate the downfall of Napoleon with Wellington, but even more than the name of Wellington do we remember that of Pitt. Why is this ? Pitt has come down to us with the fame, justly earned, of rare ability, dauntless courage, and the highest patriotism. A French historian<sup>1</sup> has called him the only great adversary that was encountered by the French Revolution and by Napoleon. Yet he fought against them for nearly fifteen years with singularly little success. Why, again, was this ? Because, in the words of the best-known of his biographers, 'locked in a death-grapple with the French Revolution, he was struggling with something superhuman, immeasurable, incalculable.'

Now, with all possible respect for the author of this eloquent phrase, I am bound to confess that such an answer is not satisfactory to me, and should not be accepted as satisfactory by any student of history. Nothing human can be superhuman ; and, if we cannot account for Pitt's failure, the fault must lie in ourselves. Frankly, what do we know about Pitt ? I cannot help thinking that we know remarkably, I might almost say disgracefully, little. In the first place, we do not possess in our language a single history, worth the name, of England during the years 1789-1815. There is positively nothing except the vast compilation of Alison, respectable so far as it goes, but never very profound and long since obsolete. This is a great reproach to

<sup>1</sup> Sorel, i. 335.



us; and such histories as those of Sorel, Vandal, or Sybel—to give but three of many great names in France and Germany—make the reproach tenfold more galling.

But our shortcomings do not end here. We have been as negligent of biography as of history. We may, I believe, shortly possess an adequate life of Pitt, emanating, as is right, from his own university of Cambridge. None the less, we have at present only the four watery volumes of Stanhope, Macaulay's essay, and the brilliant sketch, from which I have already quoted a sentence, by Lord Rosebery. Moreover, Pitt had colleagues, many of them very remarkable men, whose influence told greatly upon the affairs of the time. Of them we know even less than of Pitt. There is positively no biography of Grenville, none of Henry Dundas, none of John, Lord Chatham, none of Windham. Of Burke we have the old life by Prior and the more recent study by Lord Morley of Blackburn; but it is a question whether even the later of these should not be revised, in view of the hundreds of letters of Burke which have been printed since it was written. To continue our survey, there is a very fair biography of Perceval, and very inadequate Lives of Castlereagh, Canning, and Lord Liverpool. Of Nelson, indeed, we have Southey's immortal study, and a fuller and more ambitious life by Captain Mahan; but the value of the latter work is impaired by imperfect knowledge of our military policy and operations during the Great War. Wellington's life, on the other hand, has still to be written, though the writer may well be excused for waiting until Mr. Oman shall have concluded his *History of the Peninsular War*. Here, at

last, to the honour of Oxford, is a worthy attempt to tell a part of the great story, and to shed new light on one of the most striking episodes of the struggle against Napoleon. It needed no small courage to rewrite the history already so brilliantly told by Napier; yet the most cursory perusal of Mr. Oman's work suffices to show how vast is the store of material which may be drawn upon for the correction of Napier, and how ably it may be used by a skilful hand.

Such an example should hearten young historical students. But unfortunately it stands alone. It is idle to plead that we lack the means to write the history of England during the revolutionary war. There are, it is true, gaps in the collections of documents. The papers of King George the Third and of the Duke of York have mysteriously vanished, and those of Henry Dundas are not accessible. But foreign histories and foreign societies, the Historical Manuscripts Commission and our own historical societies have brought masses of facts and of documents to our very doors. Lord Grenville's papers, for instance—the Dropmore Papers as they are called—in themselves a priceless mine, have been printed, and may be obtained for a few shillings. William Windham's papers have lately been purchased by the nation. Lastly, our national archives lie, and have long lain open, at the Public Record Office, crying out to have their secrets taken from them before the ink shall fade away. Yet the fact remains that we have no general history of this great period, no biography of its great men, that is not hopelessly behind the times.

You must not expect of me that I shall in these lectures make good the omissions of our idle nation.



Some little research I may claim to have made into one department of history—the military. It may be imagined that, since our history from 1793 to 1815 was a history of continued war against France, research into military affairs might serve in a manner for all. In a sense this is true, though hardly in the sense that you may expect. History may be likened to one of those old houses in which there are neither passages nor corridors, and where every room must be reached through an adjoining chamber. On paper, war seems to be such a simple matter. You send so many men across the sea to such a place, where they are landed to meet so many hostile men who happen to be in the same place, and, having met them, are victorious or defeated. But analyse the sentence a little. ‘So many men.’ Does that number mean as many as you want, or as many as some one else wants, or as many as you can get, or as many as you can support? If it means as many as you want, the matter is comparatively simple, for it may be presumed that you have them to your hand, and that military requirements demand no more. But if it means *as many as some one else*—some ally—*wants*, then you must know why he asks for that number; and, before you are aware of it, you are immersed in the thick of diplomatic correspondence. If it means ‘*as many as you can get*’, then presumably you would send more if you could obtain them. Why cannot you obtain them? Because recruits are scarce. Now voluntary recruiting depends upon the state of the labour market, and the labour market is governed by the state of trade and agriculture. And so here you plunge straight into the vast domain of domestic economy. And lastly, if ‘so many men’ means the

*number that you can support*, then it is a question either, broadly speaking, of finance, or, more narrowly, of your stock of specie; and you may find yourself confronted with the whole appalling subject of the currency.

Again, we in England send our soldiers *across the sea* to fight. But is the sea safe and open? Where are the fleets of the enemy, and where are our own? You must turn to the correspondence of the Admiralty and find out. Once more, you send your troops *to a certain place*. Why is that place chosen? Is it to help our allies? You must refer to the records of the Foreign Office. Or is it because the Navy demands it for the safety of the fleet? You must seek out the letters of the admirals on the station. Or lastly, is it a part of the military policy of the Cabinet? In that case, is the policy wise or unwise, sound or unsound? With whom did the plan originate? Which of the Cabinet supported it? Or is it that most deadly and dangerous thing in war, the result of a compromise between conflicting elements in the Cabinet? Here you must try to arrive at a just knowledge of the ideas, prejudices, and passions of individual men, in reference to the facts that were before them; and you will be happy if you fathom them aright. Finally, if the military historian accomplishes his duty perfectly, he should know these same details, not only concerning his own country, but concerning her allies, her enemy, and her enemy's allies.

So far afield may the mere inquiry into a campaign lead the student; and the same is true of every historical study, strive as you may to narrow it. This is the reason why the narrative of any department of history, singly, must be, through its mere limitations,



imperfect, and must tend to be more or less seriously inaccurate. I cannot claim, I fear, that I have in the least fulfilled my ideal of the true historian's research. I have been obliged to content myself, as regards unprinted matter, with the archives of our own Record Office, and of a few English collections, public and private, without touching those of other countries. But the historians of France and Germany have been so much more industrious than ourselves in turning their records to account, that they have enabled me to make good in some measure this omission; and thus it is that I have taken courage to choose for my subject a review of the men who carried us through the great war of the French Revolution. I shall not attempt to treat of them separately or in compartments, for that would involve much repetition and imperfect understanding. My effort shall be to take the more important events consecutively as they occurred, and to show what part these men played in them.

William Pitt the younger, as you will remember, entered public life in January 1781. With the capitulation of Yorktown in October of that year, and with the consequent resignation of Lord North in March 1782, the personal government of King George the Third came to an end. Let us give our attention in the first place to this same King. He is known to the generality of Englishmen chiefly through Whig historians, who have conspired to bring him as far as possible into contempt. The blamelessness of his private life they cannot deny, so they insinuate that it arose from mere dullness and stupidity. I am the very last man to speak otherwise than with reverence and admiration of Macaulay, but my statement is well

illustrated by his account of George the Third's second conversation with Fanny Burney. 'His Majesty, instead of seeking information, condescended to impart it, and passed sentence on many great writers, English and foreign. Voltaire he pronounced a monster. Rousseau he liked rather better. "But was there ever", he cried, "such stuff as great part of Shakespeare. Only we must not say so. But what think you? What? Is it not sad stuff? What? What?"' It was Macaulay's object to present poor Fanny as a sensitive plant violently transferred to uncongenial soil; and it was therefore essential to him to paint the thistles that grew in that soil as of the tallest and prickliest. A few hasty words of the King, introduced with consummate art, suffice for the purpose; and George the Third remains written down a fool. There is not a word to hint that he possessed a sense of the ridiculous, and was probably indulging it at the expense of the successful young authoress. No. Voltaire was a monster, and much of Shakespeare sad stuff! Such were the King's opinions—not after all so very unreasonable or indefensible, albeit narrow—and by them he must be judged.

I must ask you to banish any ideas that you may have founded upon this scene. By undeserved good fortune I am in a position which enables me to form a very different conception of the King's knowledge and taste. The magnificent Library which he collected, and which, still called the King's Library, is one of the glories of the British Museum, belongs indeed to all of us, and fortunate we are to possess it. But apart from that, the collection of drawings at Windsor Castle, the finest to be found in private hands in the

world, was nearly all purchased by George the Third. So also were very many of the beautiful engravings, and almost the entire collection of gems preserved in the same place. He further made many valuable additions to the collection of miniatures which he inherited from his father. Cosway was his favourite among contemporary miniaturists. Among painters he preferred Gainsborough, whom he employed to portray not only himself and his queen, but every one of his children. I must remind you next that he was passionately fond of music, and that programmes of concerts, drawn up in his own handwriting, are still in existence. They betray his immense admiration for Handel above all other composers; but this love for the older master did not prevent him from making every effort to induce Joseph Haydn to stay in England. So away with this foolish Whig legend that George the Third was uncultivated and utterly lacking in taste. I will grant you freely that his spelling was as uncertain as Frederick the Great's, and his syntax often very faulty. But more than this I will not concede. If you wish for a story about the King and Shakespeare, recall rather that of his asking for *King Lear* when recovering from his first attack of insanity. The doctors forbade that the play should be given to him, but he outwitted them by demanding Colman's Works, in which he knew that he should find the acting edition. On that same evening, when his three eldest daughters went in to see him he told them what he had been reading, and added, 'It is very beautiful, very affecting, very awful. I am like poor Lear, but, thank God, I have no Regan, no Goneril, only three Cordelias.' The King's relations with his



children were not always of the best, and Lord Rosebery goes so far as to say that he made his home a hell upon earth. I cannot help thinking that the hell must have had its celestial moments.

The alternative to dismissing King George as a fool is to write him down as a knave. Thus the late Sir William Harcourt used to say that he was a very clever man and a very bad man. Lord Rosebery does not go so far as this, but at least he gives him credit for being 'the ablest political strategist of his day'. This would seem to be high praise until we find the same words applied to Henry Dundas; when it appears that political strategy signifies no more than the dexterous playing off of man against man, and of faction against faction—that the strategist has in fact sunk into a tactician. But even this faint praise is damned by the contemptuous description of the King as a German princelet. 'No petty elector', so runs this scathing passage, 'held more absolutely the view of property as applied to his dominions and subjects. He saw in the American war not vanished possibilities in the guidance of a new world, but the expropriation of an outlying estate, the loss of which diminished his consequence. He fought for it therefore as doggedly as a Lord of Ravenswood for his remaining acres.' Elsewhere this is supplemented by the usual common-places about a sovereign who lets loose Red Indians and Hessian mercenaries to prey upon his subjects; and with this last spice to flavour the unsavoury morsel, we are left to digest it at our leisure.

Now let us clear our minds of cant; and to that end let us admit at once that there was a good deal more of the serpent than of the dove about King George the

Third. His great fault in the eyes of all Whig and Liberal writers is that he tried unceasingly to recover some of the sovereign's power which had been lost by his two predecessors; and this fault is blackened into a crime by the fact that he not only tried but succeeded. It must, however, be admitted that he had his excuses. After the fall of Lord Bute in 1763 the King found himself in the hands of the Whigs; and this was a severe trial for any sovereign. Whig principles, as the members of that party were never weary of repeating, were based upon the glorious Revolution of 1688. This was the set formula. The lesser men, and especially the great Whig peers, were unable to move beyond reiteration of it. Even such men as Fox and Burke, a century or more after the event, never ceased in season and out of season to utter this miserable parrot's cry. Lord John Russell actually dinned it into the ears of Queen Victoria. What did it mean? Lord Rosebery, a modern Liberal, shall answer. 'The Whig creed lay in a triple divine right; the divine right of the Whig families to govern the Empire, to be maintained by the Empire, to prove their superiority by humbling and bullying the sovereign of the Empire.'

Of these functions it may be asserted without fear of contradiction that they thoroughly understood the second and third. Never were there more scandalous jobbers, nor more insolent lecturers. The subject, moreover, which appealed to them beyond all others was that of patronage. No one can understand what patronage meant to a Whig, who has not followed their internal disputes over this burning question. At the height of the Napoleonic war, two men as able and

patriotic as Lord Grenville and William Windham could find time to exchange long letters of ceremonious acrimony as to whether an Auditorship at the Cape of Good Hope were within the gift of the Treasury or of the Colonial Office. It may, therefore, be inferred, with perfect correctness, that the government of the Empire was entirely subordinated to the welfare of the Whig party; and the results of this beneficent arrangement were well seen in the long and disgraceful administration of the Duke of Newcastle.

But this did not exhaust the powers of the Whigs for mischief. They were not even united. There were so many rival magnates, who had equal claims to power on the score of wealth and incapacity, that the different sections of the party were always squabbling. Nothing could persuade them to work together. Three different Prime Ministers from among the Whigs had George the Third to endure between 1763 and 1770, besides one of the most arrogant of their leaders in Bute's Ministry of 1762. The domineering spirit of the Duke of Bedford and the insufferable lectures of George Grenville finally sickened the King of Whig magnates, and he resolved to free himself from them for ever. He found an instrument in Lord North; and for twelve years, 1770 to 1782, he took the principal share in the guidance of British policy, fighting the Whigs with their own weapon, corruption. By the results of those years, twelve out of fifty, he is principally judged; and since they were undoubtedly disastrous, he is held to be solely responsible for every mishap, and is set down, as we have seen, to be either fool or knave or even both.

Now it is easy to assume that but for George the



Third, the American Colonies would never have been lost. It saves a good deal of trouble; it is soothing to the national conscience; and it is highly flattering to the citizens of the American Republic. But the real question at issue is whether the assumption is as true as it is convenient; and it will not be time lost if we look into it a little more deeply. Without such inquiry it is impossible to form a judgement upon King George the Third. Let us therefore consider briefly how the quarrel with the American Colonies came about, and the part taken by both sides in promoting and allaying it.

As a text it will be well to take Lord Rosebery's phrase as to 'the possibilities of the future guidance of a new world', which, according to him, George the Third deliberately threw away. In these days we seek to guide our modern new world—that is to say our self-governing colonies—along four paths only: namely (1) towards humane treatment of subject races; (2) towards administrative union of contiguous settlements; (3) towards joint action for Imperial Defence; and (4) (though of this it is as yet premature to speak with any certainty) towards some system of Imperial commerce which shall give special advantages to the members of the Empire. In regard to the first of these, our intervention in favour of native races is always fiercely resented. Indeed it may be said that the Colonists detest nothing so much. As regards administrative union little or nothing remains now to be done, so far as the mother-country is concerned. Imperial Defence the colonies long declined to hear of, but have latterly begun to regard as important to their own interests. Of Imperial Preference, as it is called, I shall say nothing.

Now, in the older days of our colonial history, our attempts at guidance were confined to these same four paths, the American Colonies being practically free to wander in all other directions as they would. But the order of things was reversed. Close trade within the Empire had been founded as the cornerstone of Imperial policy by the Acts of Trade, passed in the reign of Charles the Second. These Acts from the first were found impossible of enforcement in the colonies, and were a constant source of friction between them and the mother-country. They were, in fact, the true cause of the rupture between England and America; but the trouble was not a little aggravated by the efforts made by England on behalf of native races or of slaves. Such interference, then as now, gave the greatest offence; and the argument employed against it was the same as at present—‘We have to live among these native races. You have not. Learn what it means to live among them before you presume to preach.’ It is an argument that is not easy to combat.

In the matter of administrative union all efforts of the Imperial Government were foiled by an intensely selfish local spirit among the American provinces. The Colonists had a dangerous and encroaching neighbour at their gates in the shape of the French in Canada; but at any time they could by a joint effort have rooted the French out. As things were, they laid the burden of their defence as far as possible upon Red Indians, of whom the most warlike tribes were fortunately nearer to them than to their enemies. James the Second strove to introduce administrative union by royal prerogative, for the express purpose of driving

the French from Canada; but his work, which was dictated by genuine statesmanship, was instantly upset by the glorious Revolution of 1688. From that time forward this much-needed reform vanished into the background. Provincial jealousies increased rather than diminished. The French, powerful in their organization, though absurdly inferior in numbers, took advantage of the resultant weakness of the American Colonists; and it was actually necessary for the mother-country to come forward in order to save from two to three millions of British settlers from one-tenth their number of French. The work, after much mismanagement under Newcastle, was finally accomplished by Pitt; and a gigantic territory, extending from the mouth of the St. Lawrence to the mouth of the Mississippi, passed under the British flag.

Immediately upon the conclusion of peace, there came up the question of garrisons for this huge tract of country, and with it the entire question of Imperial Defence. How was it to be settled? The Colonies professed to accept the principle that they ought to contribute towards the cost. The case was one for amicable adjustment; and in that spirit the British Ministers approached it. The representatives of the Colonies pleaded that their contribution might be voluntary, and the Ministers assented, asking only if they could agree upon the proportion that should be furnished by each Colony. The representatives were silent, for they knew well that such agreement was impossible. Now we know how the Americans—represented by their Government—have always dealt with us since they have been an independent state. They must always prevail, and never give way; they



must always take and never concede ; they enjoy the flouting of an older community as a proof of their superiority ; and they esteem a good bargain, even if gained by dishonourable means, to mark the highest form of ability. The United States cannot engage in any form of competition with us, from athletics to diplomacy, without using foul play. They must win, if not by fair skill, then by pre-arranged trickery or violence ; if not by open negotiations, then by garbled maps and forged documents. There is the fact. It may be unpleasant, but it cannot be denied.

Were the Americans of 1763 different from those of to-day ? On the contrary, they were exactly the same. It has been my fate to study their early history very closely in original documents, and it is easy to trace their progress to their present, already long existing, state of mind. There is no guiding such a people as this, for their ways are not as ours. A large proportion, possibly a majority, may have been honest and upright in 1763, but they were overborne by an unscrupulous minority. In any case the result was the same. The one fact which the Colonists recognized was that the old menace of a French Canada was gone for ever. They were safe ; they were in no need of Imperial Defence, and had no intention of contributing to it. In 1764 they allowed invalid British soldiers to be dragged from their beds to fight on their behalf against predatory Indians, rather than move a finger in their own defence. I do not believe that any statesman could have come to a satisfactory settlement with the American Colonies in 1763 ; not Burke himself, certainly not Chatham. The question of Imperial Defence might have been postponed ; but in that case

the Colonists would certainly have pleaded that postponement was equivalent to abandonment. Moreover, the whole principle of the Acts of Trade had been called in question by a Boston demagogue before even the peace of 1763 had been signed; and the people of that turbulent city were ready for disorder upon any excuse.

The situation was to the last degree difficult, for a great principle was at stake. If the question of Imperial Defence were evaded, the English tax-payer had every right to clamour against the unfairness of making him pay not only for the conquest of Canada, but also for its garrisons—and all to save the pocket of the Americans. It was hopeless to look for a voluntary contribution from the Colonies; and there was no administrative machinery for levying it from them in common. The Ministry therefore fell back upon the power of the Imperial Parliament, as the one bond of administrative union, to raise the requisite sum by Imperial taxation. The action, though quietly accepted in many provinces, was met by a furious riot in Boston, and from that moment the existing difficulties became enormously complicated. I need not follow the dispute through its intermediate stages. Beyond all doubt great and foolish mistakes were made by the British Government; but the provocation was quite insufficient to excuse the outrageous violence of the American leaders, and their shameful maltreatment of the partisans of England. It was this last, as I believe, that principally determined George the Third to interpose by force of arms. He was very unwilling to fight the Americans. But when peaceable, orderly, and unselfish subjects went in terror of their lives for

no reason except that they acknowledged the authority of the Imperial Parliament for the maintenance of an Imperial interest, and appealed to him for protection, it was very difficult to refuse it. These facts are wholly ignored by Whig historians. It is their custom to belaud the Americans as angels of light, and to decry the King as the Prince of Darkness. The truth is that the American agitators behaved abominably, and that, in distribution of the responsibility for the quarrel, they must bear the heavier share of the burden.

We can now see that there were abundant reasons why the King should have fought for America, apart from the wholly gratuitous assumption that he regarded his dominions and his subjects as his absolute property. He had loyal supporters to defend—and they were the cream of the population of America—as well as rebels to suppress. But even if this had not been the case, wherein is it specially characteristic of a German princelet to wish to hand down intact the territory which he has inherited from his ancestors? ‘The idea of the greatness of the State’, wrote the eminent French historian, M. Albert Sorel, ‘is continuously bound up with the extent of the State, and these ideas are as old as human nature’; and he quotes the saying of Catherine of Russia—‘Those who gain nothing are losers.’ The evidence of Catherine, who began life as a petty German princess, may be considered suspicious; but surely M. Sorel is right. Does not every good citizen feel the loss of territory as a diminution of his own importance? Did not all England thrill with rage when we lost Minorca, and sacrifice Byng upon the altar of its indignation? Did not every Spaniard



feel humbled when first South America, and more recently Cuba and Porto Rico, were torn from the Spanish crown? Does not every Russian feel humbled at this moment over the loss of Corea? The King is the first of citizens; and I think that we do ill to blame one who has inherited a great dominion, if he is jealous of transmitting it undiminished, if not augmented, to his successors.

When the sword was fairly drawn, the King undoubtedly fought with doggedness to the end; and for this reason he is compared to a ruined landlord struggling for his last acres. Once again, he was fighting for the American royalists, and he was right, for after his final defeat, they were shamefully hounded out of the country by their victorious opponents. These same royalists furnished, moreover, the principal cause why, in a technical sense, a mistaken plan of operations was adopted. The reduction of the American Colonies, supposing them to be resolutely hostile, was as a military enterprise far beyond the strength of the British Isles, or of any other nation at that period. The King's military advisers, therefore, counselled a naval blockade, which, as a measure of coercion, would have been both wiser and cheaper, and probably little less effective. But the partisans of the British were urgent in their demand for troops, and no wonder; for they would have been exposed to all the violence of the revolutionists, exasperated as it would have been by the steady pressure of the British warships. In another respect, also, the King made a blunder more creditable to his heart than to his head. The operations, once undertaken, should have been pursued relentlessly until submission was assured; whereas in

the first campaign of 1776 there was a blending of sword and olive-branch, which was very fatal in its results.

When once the revolted Colonists had allied themselves with the French, it was plain that the quarrel must be fought out to the end. Chatham adjured his country not to grant the independence of America from dread of any foreign power; and Chatham assuredly had none of the characteristics of a German princelet. The singular thing is that George the Third's pertinacity was within an ace of being crowned by partial success. Latterly he decided to give up the hope of keeping the Northern Colonies, and to concentrate all his force upon the Southern, where the royalists were numerous and, having been goaded by savage ill-treatment at the hands of their opponents, very active and energetic. Moreover, the Colonists at large were weary of the struggle. Few of them felt any interest in the quarrel; and their military leaders, many of them as noble and gallant men as were to be found in any country, were extremely ill-supported by their fellow-citizens. I have mentioned above the usual cheap sneer at George the Third for turning Red Indians and hired Hessians against his own subjects. The writers who indulge in this sentimental nonsense appear to be unaware that the Americans were the first to employ the Indians as fighters in the war, and that they deserve no reproach on that account, inasmuch as it was quite impossible for either side to prevent Indians from taking part in it. Again, such writers either do not know, or dishonestly conceal the fact, that not a half—some say not one-fourth—of the American regular troops were of American birth. They were

mercenaries, just as were the Hessians; and they were hired because the Americans born cared not enough for their revolution to fight for it. The truth is that the Colonists, with a few grand exceptions, cut a very contemptible figure in the war. Thrice as numerous as the Boers in South Africa, they ought to have made an end of the British in the first campaign. As things were, they cried out for France to drive their enemy from America, as they had cried to the British to drive the French from Canada. 'If France delays timely aid,' wrote Washington in April, 1781, only six months before Yorktown, 'it will avail us nothing if she attempt it hereafter. We are at the end of our tether, and now or never our deliverance must come.' x

The deliverance did come; yet a careful American writer long ago expressed the opinion that Great Britain abandoned the contest in the South just when she ought most to have pressed it. When North was wringing his hands over Yorktown, and lamenting, 'Oh, God, it is all over!' the King was perfectly calm and undismayed. If he could have had his way, there would have been another campaign, with the almost certain result that the Southern States would have returned to their allegiance. We may rejoice that the fighting ended where it did; but, before condemning the King's obstinate persistence in a hopeless task, it is as well to realize that it was not hopeless, and that he was within measurable distance of obtaining a part at least of his object.

However, the fact remains that he was beaten, and, being beaten, had to drink the cup of humiliation. In 1785, John Adams, one of the most formidable and



strenuous of his opponents in America, presented himself at the Court of St. James's as the first Minister of the United States. Not without emotion he addressed his late Sovereign respecting the purport of his mission. After a few manly words of excellent taste and feeling, he expressed his hope that the 'old good humour' might be restored between the two branches of the Anglo-Saxon family. The King listened with dignity, and answered with the distinct articulation that was habitual to him. He had never possessed the gift of expressing himself with clearness and ease, and his utterance was generally hurried and precipitate. He spoke now with a tremor in his voice, and with long silences between clause and clause. 'I wish you, Sir, to believe, and that it may be understood in America, that I have done nothing in the late contest but what I thought myself indispensably bound to do by my duty to my people. I will be very frank with you. I was the last to consent to the separation; but the separation having become inevitable, I have always said, and I say now, that I would be the first to meet the friendship of the United States as an independent power.' The words came from his heart, and they were the words of a man. Adams felt it, and though the less moved of the twain, had much ado to restrain his tears. He had no doubt been taught that the King was a mere German princelet, but now he knew better. Let us also know better in future.

So far, then, had the King gone at the beginning of 1782. In dealing with the American question he had failed disastrously; but the original trouble had been none of his making, and faction in England had done its utmost to increase the difficulty. Absolute sur-

render to the Colonists at the outset might have averted trouble with America for a time, but by no means certainly, even for a time; for the Acts of Trade, which contained the commercial code of the Empire, lay at the root of the American grievances. Any other measure must have failed, and brought with it much the same results as actually occurred. Burke, being a man of profound thought and deep insight, would have tried to relieve the Colonies of the Acts of Trade; but he would have failed, through no fault of his own, owing to British prejudice. Chatham would have died sooner than abate one clause of the Acts, and would have been wrecked, as was the King, upon the rocks of American independence. British statesmen may be thankful that the King took the awful load of this American question upon his own shoulders; but they must not suppose that, because he fell beneath it, it could have been carried by any one else.

The King having been conquered, it remained to disarm him of his weapons of corruption, which was very properly done by Burke's economical reforms. But among the gifts of George the Third were courage of the very highest order, and a tenacity of purpose which was extremely difficult to shake. Being now the weaker party, he was reduced, in order to gain his ends, to the arts of a very skilful and unscrupulous tactician. He was, however, very far from being a mere schemer. He had by this time much experience of business, a great knowledge of public affairs, and a very shrewd insight into the minds of men. His memory was peculiarly retentive; his industry and attention to official matters were indefatigable, and his judgement by no means to be lightly valued. The number of his minutes,

brief but pithy, attached to official papers, shows the care with which he perused them; and it may be added that he had a vigilant and unerring eye for a Whig job. Many a deserving officer, especially on the Irish establishment, escaped supersession by a Lord Lieutenant's favourite through the King's intervention; and many an attempt to condone military irregularities and indiscipline was baffled owing to his watchfulness and decision. That he perpetrated jobs of his own is of course undeniable; but, in spite of this, it may truly be said that he was uniformly the protector of the friendless and the deserving. Instances of this will come before us in due time.

After the fall of North, he was obliged to endure the infliction of a Whig Ministry under Lord Rockingham, aggravated by the inclusion of Charles Fox as one of the Secretaries of State. As usual, the Government was made up of two jarring sections, and it began its career by an action as disgraceful as the King himself could have wished. Fox and his brother Secretary, Shelburne, sent rival emissaries to negotiate peace at Paris, with the result that between them they very nearly lost Canada as well as America. Rockingham died while the dispute between them was still raging, and, on the appointment of Shelburne to succeed him, Fox resigned. Shelburne took young William Pitt as his Chancellor of Exchequer, but after eight months of precarious power was ousted by the coalition of Fox and North. The reconciliation of these two men, who, during the American War, had sworn eternal political enmity to each other, was received by the nation with a deep groan of disgust, which was not unheard by the King. Very reluctantly, he accepted Fox and North



as Secretaries of State under the nominal leadership of the Duke of Portland, and, profoundly miserable, waited for his opportunity to get rid of them. The occasion soon came. Fox brought in and passed through the Commons an East India Bill, which, justly or unjustly, provoked an extraordinary hostile clamour. The King circulated a paper to the effect that he should regard any member of the House of Lords who voted for the Bill as an enemy. The Bill was thrown out, whereupon the Commons, with the support of Ministers, passed what was practically a vote of censure on the Crown. The King retorted by sending a message to North and Fox requiring them to deliver up their seals. Fox could not believe it. 'He would not dare to do it,' he said. 'Ils n'osent pas,' exclaimed Napoleon, when told that the Russian squadrons were advancing immediately upon him at Eylau. So far may men overrate the power of their prestige. Within a few hours William Pitt had accepted the offices of First Lord of the Treasury and Chancellor of the Exchequer, and Fox was fain to recognize his dismissal.

There is no gainsaying the fact that the action of the King herein was absolutely unscrupulous; but it was, at any rate, open and unabashed, and, in its way, superbly audacious. Many men would have lacked the courage for so bold a stroke in the teeth of a very formidable resolution of the House of Commons; but the King had correctly gauged the feeling of the country towards the Coalition. Moreover, though he might underrate Fox's intellectual powers, he had taken a very accurate measure of Fox's tactical incompetence. After his fall Fox made every blunder that was possible to him in Parliament; and Pitt, thanks to his

father's training, took advantage of this to the utmost. Upon a dissolution six months later Fox's party was hopelessly beaten at the polls; and their leader, humiliated and discredited, was destined to sit in opposition practically to the end of his life.

It may be doubted whether the King would have proceeded to such extremes against any man but Fox. He abhorred Fox. He considered the great Charles James to be destitute of morals in private and of principles in public life; and it is not easy to prove that he was wrong. It is incontestable that Fox was a man of very great natural endowments and of quite exceptional charm; and it is open to any one to say that, but for the abominable training given to him by his father, he would have been a better man than he eventually became. But when all is said and done, the worship of Fox, sedulously preached for years after his death at Holland House, has very much that is artificial in it. Let it by all means be granted that his personal fascination was irresistible, that in private life he was sweet-tempered and good-natured, that he was a fair scholar, that, though Euripides was his favourite of the Greek tragedians, he had real appreciation of the best that is to be found in literature, that he could find enjoyment in the most simple and innocent pleasures, and that he bore his losses at play with cheerfulness and equanimity. All this cannot do away with the fact that he was early demoralized by self-indulgence, that from beginning to end of his life he was as reckless of the interests of others as of his own, and that, at heart, he was not only unprincipled, but thoroughly selfish. His political career is marked by violent transitions, which show all the petulance of a

spoiled child. His first essays in Parliament were no more than the pastime of a busy profligate, who wished to vary the common round of dissipation ; nor did they become serious until personal pique drove him into opposition. Then followed the hasty rupture with Shelburne after Rockingham's death ; the equally hasty rebound into coalition with North ; frantic assaults upon the Royal prerogative when he stood to lose by it, equally frantic defence of it when he stood to gain ; his fractious and impracticable bearing towards his party over the proposed coalition with Pitt in 1792 ; and his final lapse, less from true sympathy and understanding than from blind irritation, into championship of the rule of the mob in Paris. ' How much the greatest event it is that has happened in the world, and how much the best,' he wrote, upon hearing of the fall of the Bastille. And yet he is held up to us as ' the negation of cant and humbug '. If ever a sentence in this world rang hollow and false, it is that which I have just quoted ; and it does not stand alone. In his eagerness to pose as the apostle of liberty, Fox laid himself out, as deliberately as ever did Byron, to offend and to shock the susceptibilities of Englishmen and Englishwomen at large. Such a pose is not uncommon. Many an impostor has adopted it and still adopts it, with his tongue in his cheek, for the sake of a little easy notoriety. Fox and Byron assumed it from sheer bitterness of heart, for identically the same reason, that each of them had lost his self-respect.

This, I think, is the key to the extremes and extravagances of Fox's later opinions, as shown in his letters and speeches. They express no conviction ; they are alive with no true reasoned sympathy. They continue



to display at times keen insight and astonishing power, but they are always increasingly marred by exaggeration and perverted sentiment. Women who have forfeited their character often try to cover the loss by playing Lady Bountiful; men in the like predicament become Friends of Humanity. The instinct in each case is the same, to prove to the world that they have still some good, generous, and unselfish feeling in them. But such Lady Bountifuls are always over-bounteous, such Friends of Humanity always over-humane; for theirs is the work of the heart indeed, but of the heart ungoverned by the head, of kindly impulse, but not of elevated principle. Viewed in this light, Fox's later utterances are infinitely pathetic, for they are the lamentations of a generous soul over his lost self-respect. Like Mirabeau, Fox mourned over the irretrievable ruin of his character; and, to bring home to him that ruin the more poignantly, there stood before him the figure of his young rival, exasperating in its blamelessness. The mere physical differences between the two accentuated the contrast—Fox, very broad and very fat, with rolling gait and merry black eyes, a friend to all the world; and Pitt, tall, lank, and ungainly, with his insolent nose in the air, cold, solitary, and Olympian. No wonder that the brother profligate of Fox—Sheridan—railed at Pitt's chastity, in default of a weaker point. No wonder that Fox was, in spite of himself, terribly jealous of Pitt. No wonder that in 1792 he was furious when Pitt declared that his rival could not be at once admitted to the Foreign Office, in the event of a coalition with the Whigs, owing to his expressed opinions upon the French Revolution. No wonder that Fox insisted that Pitt should leave the Treasury, that 'he

became angry and rude in his manners', and that he declared with an oath that 'there was no Address that Pitt could frame, to which he would not propose an amendment and carry it to a division'.

All this is a matter for weeping rather than sneers. In 1792, Fox, though he had been guilty of many wild and foolish speeches and actions, had not committed himself beyond recall. Could he then have taken over the Foreign Office, his knowledge of men and of the world alone, quite apart from his great intellectual gifts, would have been of priceless service to the Ministry and to the country. He differed in no material point of foreign policy from Pitt. Where he did differ he was right and Pitt was wrong; and he would have directed foreign affairs with a breadth of view and a clear common sense such as no other man in England could have brought to the task. That he could have averted war I do not believe, but that his counsel would have been invaluable for conducting it I feel assured. It was not to be. The mischief was done. The spoiled child could not bring himself to submit to the humiliation of working under the good boy; and, but for a short six months, Fox was destined to live the rest of his life according to its beginning, disappointed, embittered, and sinking daily lower in his own self-esteem. Nor did even these few months occur until after the death of Pitt.

Let us now leave Fox and turn to his greater rival.

'Pitt,' wrote Windham to Canning in April, 1802, and therefore in a critical mood, 'Pitt certainly possesses more powers than any single man, and more than most combinations of men; yet the sufficiency even of his powers may be doubted, even if he were

disposed to exert them. But that I fear he never will be. He has a sort of inveterate prudence, an instinctive horror of indiscretion, which will never suffer those qualities, which use to carry with them the enthusiasm of mankind, to have their full scope. He has been so bred in a riding-house [Windham, I must remind you, was very fond of schooling young horses, and was, further, a constant attendant at Newmarket], so completely put upon his haunches, that he can never fairly lay himself out *ventre-à-terre* so as to win the prize in the race of renown and glory. It is very fatal this, both for the country and for him. For infallibly, if the historians of these times shall not be led away by the mere popular and vulgar notions (which, however, they are very likely to be), but should bethink themselves of a comparison between him and Burke, he will never come out in the character of a great man, although he must always retain that of a man of great ability.' <sup>1</sup> Here unfortunately Windham's draft comes to an end, but it is interesting to find that Canning agreed with him as to Pitt's inferiority to Burke.

Before further examination of this criticism, which is incomparably the most interesting that I have ever encountered of Pitt, let us glance for a moment at his birth and parentage. He was bred, of course, of Pitt and Grenville. The blood of the Pitts was an adventurous strain; William's grandfather, Robert, having founded the fortunes of the family in India and brought them back in the sole of his shoe in the shape of the Pitt diamond. The great Chatham carried on this inheritance of adventure. He was above all things an imaginer of great enterprises, having,

<sup>1</sup> Windham to Canning, April 24, 1802, B.M. *Add. MS.* 37844.



further, a transcendent gift of inspiring men with the faith to believe in them, with the hope to undertake them, and with the spirit to achieve them. So far and no further, he was a great statesman. He could see visions of a great Empire, and kindle men to conquer it; but, as means to conquest, he took the first that enthusiasm might offer, without a thought of the future. As an administrator he was almost disabled by his contempt of detail and his ignorance of finance. Details are, it is true, to be found in some of his instructions to his generals. There is enumeration, for instance, of the cannon that should be used for certain operations. But these are the wrong details, with which he had no concern whatever and ought never to have interfered; and their appearance rather proves than disproves his incompetence to deal with them. For the rest, he had a passion, amounting to a mania, for what is called the grand manner in all things; and he carried the grand style, whether in condescension or obsequiousness, to extravagant lengths. Take the letter with which he introduced his son to the care of his college tutor at Cambridge:—

‘Sir, Apprehensions of gout, about this season, forbid my undertaking a journey to Cambridge with my son. I regret this more particularly as it deprives me of an occasion of being introduced to your Personal Acquaintance and that of the Gentlemen of your Society; a loss I shall much wish to repair at some other time. Mr. Wilson, whose admirable instruction and affectionate care have brought my son early to receive such further advantages as he cannot fail to find under your eye, will present him to you. . . . Too

young for the irregularities of a man, he will not, on the other hand, prove troublesome by the puerile sallies of a boy.'

The entire letter is in the same style, down to the 'with great esteem and regard, Sir, your most faithful and most obedient humble servant'. I have always my doubts whether Chatham was perfectly sane; and it is worth noting that the last Lord Camelford—the last member, that is, of the senior line of the Pitts—was certainly insane. The shape of Chatham's head, lost in all pictures owing to the wig, but revealed in busts, suggests some cranial abnormality. The top of the skull is low, and the brow suddenly protrudes from it, like a great beetling crag, with an abruptness that is startling. Whatever the cause, there is no doubt but that, as Mr. Lecky observed, he came dangerously near to be a charlatan.

The Grenvilles were a very different stock. Their most distinguished ancestor was the Sir Richard of the *Revenge*, a most impractical man by all accounts, subject to wild fits of rage, sensitive even to madness where he thought his honour was concerned, and of immovable resolution. No better instance of this stubborn pride and obstinacy could be found than his famous fight of a single ship against a whole fleet. These special qualities were the general characteristics of the Grenvilles, though they never again found expression in so heroic a form. They conceived themselves to be naturally the salt of the earth; and as, by an extraordinary series of rich marriages, they gradually rose to immense wealth and influence, their self-esteem exceeded all bounds. Taken as a body they possessed more than ordinary ability, and were

not without great qualities. They could be straightforward, generous, and diligent. They had a sense of duty, and the courage to obey it; they had their ideal of patriotism which, if sometimes narrow, was certainly not low; but their great and essential defect was that one and all regarded themselves too seriously. They lacked sense of the ridiculous; and this failing kept them out of touch with their fellow men. The greatest of them, such as George the author of the Stamp Act, and his son William, Lord Grenville (of whom we shall see more), were men of sincere religious conviction, high principle, strong character, wide knowledge, and cultivated understanding. But their ways were academic, if I may, without offence, use the phrase in this place. They were dons, to use the slang expression, dons of the old extinct type, ungenial Joves of an Olympus whose atmosphere was too much rarefied to be human, too close to be divine. They would descend to lecture men, or to scold them, but never to joke or laugh with them. And they were pitiless in their prolixity. 'When he has worried me for two hours,' said George the Third of George Grenville, 'he looks at his watch to see if he cannot tire me for two hours more. . . . I would as soon see the devil in my closet as George Grenville.' As a necessary consequence the mediocrities among the Grenvilles were flagrantly, offensively, and unpardonably mediocre. The very profligates among them—for every family must have its bad characters—were pompous and absurd, with vices that commanded no sympathy, and frailties that evoked no compassion. Perhaps the most human and lovable of all the Grenvilles was Thomas, whose monument is the priceless library which he



bequeathed to the British Museum. It is said of him that he made two famous entrances into the Admiralty, one through the window in company with the Gordon rioters, and one through the front door as First Lord. Moreover, he was known to all the world as Tom.

The women among the Grenvilles, as might be expected, were models of their sex, strict and faithful performers of all womanly and wifely duties, kindly and charitable, but didactic and austere. There is at least one country parish where there survives still the tradition of one of these ladies—a daughter of George and sister of William—who, at the conclusion of divine service, would stand at the church door to see the village girls file out, and in an awful voice would bid Betsy Turner and Mary Baker remove the ribbons from their hats. Then would her ladyship deliver a brief but impressive homily upon the virtue of modesty and the inevitable fate of the vain and giddy; and the poor girls would slink away tearful and crestfallen, with their small pleasures spoilt, but, one can hardly believe, with their hearts improved. The instinct of lecturing was strong in the Grenvilles, and infected all their better and kinder qualities with an unpleasant flavour.

Hester, Lady Chatham, a sister of George Grenville, was not without her share of the family characteristics, though her unusual mental endowment lifted her to a wider outlook than was common to the women of her family. Her husband's nephew, Lord Camelford—who was not a kindly-disposed critic—described her as cold and ambitious, marrying, not for love of the man, but of the great career which she foresaw for him. However that may be, the marriage was a very happy one; and, when ill health closed Chatham's public life, Lady

Hester became his devoted and uncomplaining nurse and companion. Almost the only letter that still exists from her to her son William, written as late as 1799, was to ask a place for some dismissed offender on the ground of 'his unceasing, and indeed his extraordinary, attachment and zeal for your ever-loved father'. Over her husband Lady Chatham exercised considerable if unobtrusive influence, and, though her retirement to Burton Pynsent removed her out of close touch with her son during his time of power, she retained to the end of a long life a vivid interest in his career. Wilberforce described her in old age as 'a noble antiquity'; and she must have been no common woman to inspire a phrase of such grace and felicity. She was indeed not unfitted to be the wife and mother of two so famous men.

From such stocks did William Pitt descend; and very strangely were their characteristics blended in him. The scholarly instinct, which made his precocious mind turn so readily to classical studies, came chiefly, if not wholly, from his mother's side. Utilizing this same scholarly instinct, his father, as we know, trained him above all things to the mastery of his own tongue. Chatham's ambition was that the boy should be a House of Commons' man, which is not the same thing as a statesman. No doubt correct expression—the faithful rendering of thought into words—is a stimulant in receptive minds to the generation of thought, and to the refinement of such thought into clearness and lucidity. No doubt also the study of a masterpiece of ancient oratory is good exercise in the art of marshalling facts and arguments in logical and telling sequence for the persuasion of men. No

doubt, once more, the power of paraphrasing Thucydides at sight into clear and imposing English, is valuable for the purpose of masking other difficulties besides the diabolical inversions of the great Greek historian. But a statesman needs some knowledge of modern history, some acquaintance with the past and present life of Europe; and this seems to have formed no part of Pitt's studies. From his father's talk, possibly, he may have gathered the broad outlines of the past—sketched, as we may guess, with rare vividness and power—but Chatham appears to have credited his son with the imagination and the divining power which had served to carry himself triumphantly through a short—a very short—period of supreme rule. Herein, as it seems to me, the Great Commoner revealed his limitations. In the first place, he did not perceive—and for this a devoted parent may be pardoned—that his son was more of a Grenville than a Pitt; and, in the second place, he did not realize—any more than I think do we—that if he himself had remained for long at the head of affairs in England, his contempt of the details of administration and his absolute ignorance of finance would have brought him down with a mighty fall.

So Pitt was kept, as Windham put it, in the riding-house; trained to go, as the phrase runs, within himself, to change his leg in obedience to the least pressure of circumstances, and to keep his haunches well under him, so as to turn and wheel with sureness and stability. He was an animal of high courage, and his father never doubted but that, upon occasion, he would extend himself and gallop. In one way the blood of the Pitts showed itself strongly, for, in spite of all the hours in



the *manège*, young William could kick up his heels from sheer lightness of heart. He had a sense of the ridiculous; he enjoyed frivolous amusements; he could play the fool at times, which is not only sweet, as Horace told us long ago, but wholesome; he was fond of young people, and in congenial company was the wittiest and most humorous of men. In yet another direction a very noble instinct of the father was still further ennobled in the son. Chatham alone among Paymasters-General had refused to accept the vast irregular profits of that most lucrative office. William Pitt the younger, with an income of £300 a year, began his public life by declining the offer of a well-paid office in Lord Rockingham's Ministry. Four years later, when Prime Minister, he used a sinecure, which every one had assigned as a reasonable allowance for himself, to extinguish a pension corruptly granted by Lord Rockingham. There was no calculation about this; it was a matter of pure instinct. Father and son had so lofty a contempt of money, and so exalted a conception of the duties and dignity of public life, that they could not have acted otherwise. Such a fact was not unmarked by the nation, can never pass unmarked by any nation. In France the deserved title of the Incorruptible wrought wonders for such a mediocrity as Robespierre. In our own time scorn of wealth and honours accounts for much of the adoration paid to the memory of Charles Gordon.

But in other respects the strain of the Grenvilles asserted itself predominantly. It was not wholly mischievous, for it gave Pitt an aptitude for detail, and lead him to read Adam Smith's *Wealth of Nations*; but it strengthened unduly the influence of the riding-

school. Pitt's prudence at the age of twenty-one was already inveterate. Besides the office which he declined from Rockingham, he refused the Prime Ministership upon the fall of Shelburne's Ministry; and when, finally, he accepted it at the age of twenty-four, he held himself aloof from his fellows with Olympian haughtiness. Various reasons are put forward to account for this attitude. He was shy; he was proud; he had inherited a part of his father's theatrical tricks, but could accomplish only an ungainly coldness as a substitute for Chatham's alternations of imperious awfulness and overpowering humility. I think it very probable that the general instinct of striking an attitude came to him from his father, but that his self-imposed isolation was adopted simply from fear of committing himself. In a very small, very select circle he would frisk like a yearling, but towards the rest of the world he was bound by the traditions of the riding-school. He was trained for the House of Commons, and he needed no training for the playground; but on any neutral territory he feared to find himself at a loss.

In truth he had been very lucky, and was probably shrewd enough to know it. Fox had damaged himself irretrievably. Shelburne had so far revealed his nature that no one, and least of all Pitt, would trust him. Even Burke had suffered some eclipse, partly from the offence which he had given to English prejudice in the matter of Ireland, partly owing to a flagrant job of which he had been guilty during his short tenure of office under Rockingham, and partly owing to the violence and intolerance which had begun to increase in him with advancing age. Pitt had, therefore, few rivals; while to the King he appeared as an angel sent from

heaven to deliver his Sovereign from the Whigs and from Fox. His Majesty could not afford to quarrel with him, and the young Minister was well aware of the fact. Yet he was far too discreet to lecture his Royal Master, who, after all, was necessarily far superior to him in experience, had an incomparably wider knowledge of foreign affairs, and could teach him not a little about the government of men. On the other hand, Pitt was not a man to allow any one to rule but himself, not a man to concede power in return for royal blandishments; and the King knew it. The Minister kept his Sovereign at a distance, as he kept the rest of the world; and the Sovereign seems to have shared the dread, which was felt by all but Pitt's circle of intimates, for this formidable young man. They were a strange pair, but they treated each other with uncommon tact and respect. In my next lecture I shall begin to follow them further through their long companionship.



## LECTURE II

THE first years of Pitt's administration must remain always a portent of precocious Parliamentary talent. At the outset he had the insight and the courage not to take Shelburne, perhaps the ablest, and certainly the most untrustworthy, man in England, into his Government; and his colleagues, with one exception, were men of no value. Yet he not only held his own in Parliament, but attacked in succession every difficult problem of statesmanship that awaited solution. First and foremost he dealt with finance; then with India; then with Ireland; then with Parliamentary Reform; and, as a part of his general policy, he negotiated a commercial treaty with France. His measures were, without exception, good. Those intended for Ireland, indeed, especially excellent and far-seeing; but they were, unfortunately, thrown out, as were those for Parliamentary Reform also, owing to the bitter opposition of the House of Commons. Pitt did not persist in his Irish schemes. The inveterate prudence and the training of the riding-school seem to have been too strong for him; and he accepted his rebuff, as he had accepted Sheridan's taunt of 'the Angry Boy', as a lesson in caution.

Soon afterwards there arose a more critical question, the impeachment of Warren Hastings. Once again prudence carried the day; but here may be detected the influence of his one efficient colleague, whom it is now time to introduce to you.

Henry Dundas, the scion of a well-known legal family in Scotland, and himself the son of a Lord Advocate, was born seventeen years before Pitt, and entered Parliament in 1774. He soon distinguished himself as one of North's firmest supporters, and one of America's most bitter adversaries. The fall of North, however, by no means brought with it the submission of Dundas. Buoyancy was of the essence of the man. Principle with him was a kind of water-ballast, to be pumped in or pumped out, according to the requirements of the moment in respect of trim, stability, and freeboard. Thus he kept his place as Lord Advocate under the Rockingham Ministry, and in 1782 received from Shelburne not only the Treasurership of the Navy, but the Keepership of the Scottish signet for life, together with the patronage of all Scottish places. From that moment Dundas became a power in the land, and as rapacious of patronage as any Whig magnate. To the credit of his penetration, he early took note of the promise of Pitt, attached himself to him, and in 1783 pressed him strongly, though without success, to accept the Prime Ministership in succession to Shelburne. Naturally, therefore, he joined Pitt's Administration in 1784, once again as Treasurer of the Navy; and, after the passing of Pitt's East India Bill, took over, by private arrangement, the superintendence, not omitting the patronage, of the East Indies.

One detail in the course of his connexion with India is worth following. In 1781 he had sat on a Secret Committee upon East Indian affairs. In 1782 he moved and carried a motion for the removal of Warren Hastings from his office. In 1786 he defended Hastings against the attack of Burke, and in 1787 he turned

upon Hastings finally, and dragged Pitt along the same path.

I do not think that a better clue to his motives can be found than that shown in his letter to Lord Cornwallis at the time. 'Mr. Pitt and I,' he wrote on the 21st of March, 'have got great credit from the undeviating fairness and candour with which we have proceeded in it [the impeachment], but the proceeding is not pleasant to many of our friends; and of course from that and many other circumstances not pleasing to us; but the truth is, when we examined the various articles of charges against Hastings, with his defences, they were so strong, and the defence so perfectly unsupported, it was impossible not to concur.' Dundas's English, as you will remark, was not his strong point, but he could not help setting down his thoughts according to the order of precedence which they held in his own mind. And what is the thought that comes uppermost? 'Mr. Pitt and I have got great credit for our undeviating fairness and candour.' Conceive of Pitt writing in such a strain, Pitt whose whole power rested upon the nation's confidence in his unquestioned rectitude and integrity.

Far otherwise was it with Dundas. He had his reputation for uprightness still to make, and here was the opportunity to assure it both with his leader and with the people. He had attached himself to Pitt, and had been shrewd enough to apprehend the secret of his ascendancy. He would show that civic virtue was no monopoly of William Pitt, but was shared by his humble follower, Henry Dundas. Incidentally, it would be a profitable transaction to throw Hastings to the wolves, and to divert them from pursuit of the



sledge of the Administration. Burke, Fox, and Sheridan might be trusted to worry the unfortunate victim for an indefinite time, in the name of sleepless humanity; and Fox and Sheridan in particular would be enchanted to parade themselves, baying loudly, over the carcase of a defenceless oppressor. They, no less than Dundas, would welcome the opportunity at once of making an honourable name for disinterestedness, of exhibiting their rhetorical powers, and of ministering to their consummate vanity. Altogether, it was an extremely clever move on the part of Dundas.

You may object that this was to leave Pitt as a mere puppet in Dundas's hands. That is to put the matter unkindly; but the truth is that Pitt had not the time to go into the case himself, as on one occasion he confessed, so voluminous were the documents concerning it. The charges, in fact, filled entire printed volumes. He was, therefore, obliged to be guided by the opinion of others; and who could be a better guide than Dundas, who had East Indian affairs at his fingers' ends? The fact that Pitt permitted the impeachment to go forward is adduced as evidence of his power and probity, inasmuch as such a decision was contrary to his own interests. I wish to put the best possible construction upon his proceedings, but I cannot believe that his father would have abandoned Hastings in the first instance, and I am confident that he would never have allowed the impeachment to be conducted as it was. Few people know anything of the trial beyond the brief description in Macaulay's famous essay; but one has only to read Burke's speeches and the record of the proceedings in the House of Commons to be convinced that the trial was no trial at all, but an infamously

malignant persecution. It is a principle in English law that every prisoner is presumed innocent until he be proved to be guilty. This presumption, which could be claimed as a right by the lowest criminal, was denied to Warren Hastings. The behaviour of Burke was especially disgraceful. It is easy to talk of his 'sleepless humanity'; but sleepless humanity does not excuse the publication and exaggeration of stories which are demonstrably false. Unless I am very much mistaken, there was something infinitely smaller than humane feeling at the root of Burke's personal animosity against Hastings. The truth is that Burke's transactions in India will not bear looking into; but it is more charitable to remember that his mind at this time was more or less diseased. Unfortunately, his vehemence dragged a really honourable man, William Windham, into a share in this travesty of a judicial prosecution.

As to Fox and Sheridan, they were mere gladiators who wished to exhibit their skill. Many years after the trial had been ended and forgotten, Sheridan met Hastings in private company, and, with easy effrontery, assured him that all the hard language which he had expended upon his victim in the famous speeches was merely, as the phrase goes, in the way of business. Hastings drew himself up, and I can guess that he compressed his resolute lips still a little closer than usual before he answered, with great contempt, 'I wish, Sir, that I had earlier been informed of this.'

I can never forgive Pitt for exposing so great a man as Hastings to such insult. Even if the Minister had thought it his duty to leave him to stand his trial, he might at least have intervened to prevent that trial from running its long and scandalous course to its

most ridiculous end. The House of Commons was so much embarrassed by Burke's mismanagement of the impeachment, and the country so much disgusted by his intemperate violence, that all parties, except Burke and Francis, would probably have been glad to see the proceedings stayed. The House of Commons, indeed, went so far as to pass a vote of censure upon Burke; but Pitt never moved. He might at least have insisted on the justice of Hastings's plea for a more speedy and regular conduct of the trial; but even this he left undone. All his zeal for economy did not prevent him from allowing tens of thousands of public money to be spent upon a disgraceful farce, and he suffered the innocent Hastings to be financially ruined by sheer abuse of the powers of Parliament. Herein no doubt he was prudent, but prudence in such cases wears an extremely uncomely aspect.

Pitt, however, was delivered from harsh criticism, while the trial was still in its early stages, by the crisis that arose in 1788 owing to the illness of the King. Insanity, which had already threatened George the Third once, now laid definite hold upon him; and the Whigs looked joyfully forward to the accession of the Prince of Wales as Regent, with power and place for themselves and their friends. Pitt's courage at this time was extraordinary. The Whigs, led by Fox, the great champion of liberty, claimed that the Prince of Wales should succeed to his father's place of right, with the full powers of the Sovereign. Pitt maintained that he should take it only by the authority of Parliament, and under the limitations imposed by Parliament; and he fought for his contention with consummate skill and address. To combine the championship of the disabled



Tory King with that of the liberties of Parliament was incomparably dexterous, and practically assured his success. The Whigs never quite forgave it. 'The characteristic feature of the present reign,' wrote the Duke of Portland to Windham in 1794, 'has been its uniform and unremitting attention and study to debase and vilify the natural aristocracy of the country, and under pretence of abolishing all party distinctions, to annihilate, if possible, the Whig party. For this express purpose the present Ministry was formed, and they have most religiously adhered to and fulfilled the purpose of their creation. Of abundant instances, their conduct at the Regency would suffice by itself to prove the fact.'<sup>1</sup> The truth is that the Whigs, feeling sure of ousting their opponents, had arranged for the perpetration of a vast mass of jobs as soon as the Regency should be established—for the sharing, to use the old proverb, of the live lion's skin. They were, therefore, more than usually sore when they found themselves disappointed, for many besides themselves expected their success. Pitt even was in doubt, for he proposed to take up practice at the Bar; and the City of London subscribed £100,000 to save him from the necessity. He waved the flattering gift aside without a moment's hesitation. 'Nothing,' he said, 'would induce me to accept it'; and this though his private income was but £300 a year, and he was already entangled in pecuniary embarrassment.

Over this question of the Regency, Pitt took leave of his inveterate prudence; and you will find that he would do so occasionally when the battle was to be fought on his strongest ground, the House of Com-

<sup>1</sup> Portland to Windham, January 11, 1794, B.M. *Add. MS.* 37844.

mons. Moreover, in this case he was not only bold but aggressive. His Regency Bill in itself was enough to annoy the Prince of Wales; and to this original offence he added the haughtiest and most uncompromising treatment of the Prince in person. If, therefore, the King's malady had proved to be permanent, only in the last resort would Pitt have been summoned to office, and he would have had to reckon, in any case, with the hostility of the Sovereign. Of all this he took the risk; and he won. He emerged from the fray stronger in his hold upon the people than ever. The King also wrote to him with deep and manly gratitude that he and his Minister were now united for life, and that nothing but death would separate them. This was the greatest moment of Pitt's career, and the date was the month of March in the fateful year of 1789.

There is curious proof of Pitt's entire self-confidence so far, in the fact that during this same year the Home Secretary, William Grenville, offered, presumably with Pitt's consent, the Presidency of the Court of Session to the Treasurer of the Navy. High judicial position would of course have removed Henry Dundas from active political life; from which the inference is clear that Pitt thought that he could do without him, and was quite unconscious of dependence upon him. Dundas himself, however, knew his own value better, and showed this in a remarkable letter to William Grenville. 'I am disposed to believe,' he wrote, 'that I could not at present leave my share of the Government of India without some inconvenience to the public service. But I speak with more confidence when I say that my secession from all political life at this time would be a very fatal step to the strength and hold

Government has of Scotland . . . a variety of circumstances happens to concur in my person to render me a cement of political strength to the present Administration, which if it were dissolved would produce very ruinous effects. I feel and state this to you with infinite regret, for I do not see a speedy remedy for it, and the situation to me grows every day, as I advance in years, more irksome and disagreeable, and in truth takes from me every comfort and enjoyment I have while I am in Scotland. But, if I was to give it up, the activity of the adherents of the Opposition would, under the sanction of the name of the Prince of Wales, gain a strength which would become irresistible, and in the meanwhile the Treasury and your Office [that is to say the Home Office] would be kept in constant hot water amidst the jarrings and jealousies and counteracting pretensions of the great men of the country.'

Now, translated into a few words, these verbose sentences mean no more than this. 'My dear foolish Grenville, at present I have the patronage of Scotland and of India ; practically I govern both countries ; you cannot get on without me. Of course it is very irksome for me to be besieged with requests and petitions whenever I go to Scotland, but in spite of my advancing years I bear up. Do you think that a pair of recluses, such as Pitt and yourself, with a stilted sense of honour and no knowledge of the world or of men, are a match for the great Whig magnates, with their control of rotten boroughs, their great territorial influence, and their commanding position as Lords-Lieutenant ? No, it needs such a man as Henry Dundas to manage these matters. You cannot do without me, and I see no



speedy remedy for it, for I have not the slightest intention of effacing myself.'

Such, as one can read between the lines, was the real meaning of Dundas; and beyond question he spoke no more than the truth. If such a character be worthy of description in dignified English, we must call him, in Lord Rosebery's words, a great political strategist. But too many functions of men are unfortunately unworthy of expression except in their own debased dialect—can this account, I wonder, for the prevalence of slang among us in these days?—and I am forced to write down Dundas as a born wire-puller. Men of his kind are no doubt necessary to representative government, possibly to every government; and it is fair to say that Dundas in his own particular line was a master. No man could more shrewdly perceive the tendencies of the moment in political affairs, nor divine more cunningly whether it would be most profitable to oppose them, to follow them, or to lead them. Such power implies intimate sympathy with the commonplace mind, intimate knowledge of the commonplace nature, boundless command of commonplace ability, boundless wealth in commonplace resource. It is, in fact, perhaps the supreme expression of the commonplace, and, as such, is still mistaken and admired for something much higher. Yet the commonplace, though raised, as mathematicians say, to infinity, remains the commonplace, and can never soar above it. There is no room here for high ideals or lofty imaginings, or noble sacrifices, or heroic resolutions; and this means, in a politician, confinement to narrow views, blindness to distant prospects, revulsion from great enterprises. When the horizon of a politician is bounded by the next Division,

the next *Gazette*, the next Election, then assuredly his head is near the ground and cannot be lifted up, so that he may look upon the stars.

So was it with Henry Dundas. I do not therefore insinuate that he was either a bad or an incapable man. He seems to have been a genial and a good-tempered one, kindly rather than the contrary by nature, a convivial companion who was not easily outdrunk, and—a very pleasing characteristic—one who in the days of his greatest prosperity never forgot old friends. ‘He was a fine fellow in some things,’ said Wilberforce. ‘People have thought him a mean intriguing creature, but in many respects he was a fine fellow.’ As a speaker he was effective, though not polished; and it redounds to his credit that the broad Scottish accent, which he never lost, provoked good humour rather than resentment in his hearers. As a writer he was verbose, clumsy, and asyntactic as George the Third. His handwriting was abominable, a huge, amorphous scrawl, having the appearance of being inscribed with a stump of wood, and requiring four sheets for the number of words that Pitt would have compressed into one. As an official he possessed undoubtedly great capacity for the transaction of affairs, and in particular what Pitt described as ‘a turn for facilitating business’. This we may construe to mean an appreciation of essentials, and the knack of restricting the attention of others as well as of himself to such essentials. We may guess that he would have been a good Chairman of Committees, and this is not a small compliment to pay him. But for any sign of great administrative power we look in vain. Scotland he overawed so thoroughly that, as Sydney Smith tells us, it needed real

courage to oppose or criticize him. In India he left no mark, beyond the high-water mark of the flood of his countrymen, whom he poured into that country with indefatigable jobbery. His fellow Scots of course assume that this was the happiest fate which could befall the great Peninsula. I hope that it was so; but for my own part I have failed to find that this Scots invasion of India was so transcendent a benefit. It is, however, so difficult to distinguish between the host of John Campbells and James Stuarts, that I may well have confounded the bad with the good, and so found the average not to rise above mediocrity.

When one remembers Pitt's inexperience, his ignorance of men and his repellent coldness of manner, it is easy to imagine how serviceable Dundas must have been to him in a hundred ways, quite apart from all question of patronage. It is easy, too, to conceive that Pitt honestly deluded himself with the idea that he kept all great affairs in his own hands, and left only the less important details to Dundas. For a short time this may have been so; and it is quite possible that he did not understand the extent of the power which he delegated to Dundas when he committed all East Indian business to his hands. But absolute control of one department necessarily signifies some influence upon the business of others. To give an instance in point, the articles of the Treaty of Versailles which concerned India were the subject of negotiation with France in 1787; and thus Dundas was brought into direct contact with the Foreign Office. Pitt's Foreign Minister, Lord Caermarthen, was a nonentity; and being always greedy of power, Pitt had taken the main direction of foreign



affairs into his own hands. Ability and industry, no doubt, made good to him in some measure his lack of knowledge and experience; and he could always fall back upon the King, who, whatever his prejudices, possessed long acquaintance with the business of Europe, accurate remembrance of the past, and not a little shrewd power of deducing conclusions as to the future. But if Pitt wished to test his opinions by the opinions of others, there was no one in his Cabinet worth consulting in a difficulty except Dundas. Thus the habit of consulting him grew and grew, until in 1793 Pitt could write of 'every act of Dundas's being as much mine as his'.

Had Pitt been a Chatham this would have been no great matter. He would have lifted Dundas from the ground and borne him away in his flight. But Pitt was nothing of the kind. He was too much of a Grenville. He did not really like foreign affairs; and, although he was too great to shrink from them when they needed his care, he would have welcomed any honourable understanding that might have delivered him from them. Dundas's manner of looking at things disqualified him for any useful counsel upon policy which demanded a wide grasp and a far sight; and his influence therefore tended always to strengthen the inveterate prudence and to keep his leader down upon his own level. 'His connexion with Dundas,' said Wilberforce, 'was Pitt's great misfortune.'

Let us now turn for a moment to Pitt's achievements as a Foreign Minister. The state of Europe was such as to demand the highest gifts of statesmanship in the man, whoever he might be, that guided England's foreign affairs. Everywhere the story was

the same—the old feudal system fallen into decay and disrepute; a general sense of unrest; a vague feeling that things must in some mysterious way be changed and improved; and much sentimental speculation, which had charmed rulers as well as subjects, upon the duties of the abstract State, and the rights of the abstract Man. An omnipotent State guided by pure Reason seemed to be the ideal of political philosophy, and more than one sovereign aspired to fulfil it in his own person. Liberty, in a general way, was acclaimed; and the news of the deliverance of America was received, by some men at any rate, in every country of Europe with profound emotion. But there was no thought yet of a perfect Constitution applicable to all countries; and least of all was the British Constitution considered perfect. On the contrary, Representative Government was held up to reprobation and scorn by the most approved thinkers; and Rousseau in particular, in the *Contrat Social*, went out of his way to sneer at the stupidity of the English.

An Englishman might have contemplated all this trouble in Europe with comparative equanimity, but for the alarming fact that the actual machinery of government was everywhere breaking down, and most ominously in the matter of finance. England and Holland alone were solvent. England was the only country in which there was a budget; in no other was there any effort to estimate probable expenditure for the current year, or to devise taxation to meet it. There was one other stable Government, besides the English, and that was the Russian, in the hands of Catherine. But between these extremes all was confusion; while both England and Russia had for neigh-

bour a country, Poland in one case and France in the other, in which the evils common to all Europe had reached an acuter stage than elsewhere.

France, since the death of Vergennes in 1787, had sunk deeper and deeper into financial difficulties. In 1781 Burke had held up Neckar's accounts to the admiration of the House of Commons; but those days had already passed away. France depended not upon institutions but upon men. She needed a firm and wise sovereign with strong and able ministers. She possessed neither, and was sinking fast into anarchy.

Holland, her neighbour, long classed with England as a maritime power, had greatly declined both in authority and in dignity, and now exerted little influence in European affairs except as a money-lender to the embarrassed Governments around her. Her old Constitution remained unchanged. Seven oligarchies of wealthy merchants ruled the seven provinces, and sent delegates to the States General at the Hague, to deal with such affairs as affected the provinces in common and to decide upon peace and war. Their High Mightinesses still maintained their old jealousy of their rival the Stadtholder, who was Admiral of the Union and Captain-General of five provinces; and Pitt's first serious diplomatic action was to intervene between the two. France had always supported the party of the States General, England that of the Stadtholder; and in 1787 the influence of France became so strong and the party of the Stadtholder so feeble, that the resources of the Republic seemed likely to pass absolutely under French control. To allow the French to be masters of the mouth of the Scheldt was what no English statesmen could permit. The reigning



Stadtholder, a miserable parody of his great ancestors of the House of Orange, was so weak and incapable that he could offer no efficient resistance. Thus it fell to the British envoy, Sir James Harris, later Lord Malmesbury, to reorganize the Stadtholder's party and to revive, by consummate craft and daring, British ascendancy in the United Provinces. Finally, at the instance of England, the King of Prussia, who was the Stadtholder's brother-in-law, marched an army into Holland to secure the position already occupied by Harris; and in 1788 an alliance was concluded between Great Britain, Prussia, and Holland, which provided for mutual defence against aggression and, as was hoped, for the preservation of peace in Europe.

Holland's neighbours in Belgium—the Austrian Netherlands as they were then called—were full of the prevailing unrest. The Emperor Joseph the Second, son of Maria Theresa, passed, according to the jargon of the day, for an enlightened prince. He was fully persuaded that he alone could make his Belgians happy. He proceeded therefore to overthrow the whole of their ancient institutions, both civil and ecclesiastic, with a high hand, in order to make way for an improved system of his own, founded upon principles which were called philosophic. Not unnaturally the people rose in insurrection. It was a curious inversion of the usual course of affairs, for in this case it was the Sovereign who tried to make a revolution and the people who resisted him. Joseph died in 1790, and was succeeded by his brother Leopold, a sensible man and a statesman, who tried to conciliate the Belgians by every possible concession. But the insurgents were suspicious and recalcitrant. They

rejected his most liberal overtures, then took to fighting among themselves, and presently collapsed ignominiously before the march of the Imperial troops.

In Spain, Charles the Third, the best king which that land had known for years, died at the end of 1788, thus making way for the feeble-minded Charles the Fourth, who was destined to drag his country down to the lowest depths of degradation. His meddlesome and profligate wife, Marie Louise of Parma, had already in 1787 made a favourite of a worthless young gentleman of the royal bodyguard, one Godoy; and she now aspired to make him into a great minister and a great statesman.

In Italy the kingdom of the Two Sicilies was committed to the younger brother of Charles the Fourth, namely Ferdinand the Fourth, who had married Maria Caroline of Austria, a sister of Marie Antoinette. These, again, were a contemptible pair. Ferdinand was a weak, ignorant, vulgar man; his wife was an intriguing, ambitious, half-clever, half-foolish, wholly mischievous woman. In them, perhaps, Bourbon and Habsburg reached their low-water mark. The administration was the worst possible, and the people the most demoralized in Europe. Their favourite Minister, John Acton, was of Irish descent, and such government as existed at all was due to him.

The Papacy, which was at chronic feud with the Kingdom of Naples, was controlled by Pope Pius the Sixth. Within his States, likewise, the administration was of the very worst. The Pope had no influence outside his dominions, and no principle, beyond the aggrandisement of his family, within them.

Tuscany, as a part of the Austrian dominions,

enjoyed, until the death of the Emperor Joseph, the good government of his brother Leopold, and prospered under it.

In the Republic of Venice the Government was thoroughly rotten, and, having neither Army, Navy, nor alliances, trembled in helpless dread of the cupidity of Austria. Genoa was even less important than Venice. Sardinia, on the other hand, was a State which had life within it. The House of Savoy believed in Catherine's maxim that those who gain nothing are losers. It aimed at the early acquisition of the Milanese, and ultimately at the headship of an Italian Federation. But meanwhile there remained many detested relics of feudal institutions; and the reigning sovereign, Victor Amadeus II, possessed neither ability nor force of character.

So much for Western Europe. Passing next to the centre and east, we come to the Holy Roman Empire with its 360 States spread over an area of about 400,000 square miles, with a population of about 30,000,000. Of these Austria claimed one-third, or 10,000,000; Prussia 2,500,000; Bavaria and Saxony each 2,000,000; Brunswick 1,000,000; and the remainder of the more important from 200,000 to 600,000 inhabitants. There still survived in name the ten circles, formed to embrace the scattered fragments, each with its assembly; there survived also the Diet of the Empire. But Empire, Diet, and Emperor all alike were mere empty forms. There was no organization, administrative, financial, or military. There was no national feeling among rulers or subjects. The petty princes were almost uniformly selfish, grasping, and jealous of their inde-



pendence; and the nobles at large were little better. There were, however, exceptions among them, and there existed not only isolated estates, but whole districts where, under the old feudal forms, the nobles were enlightened and liberal, and their subjects well cared-for and happy. Good rule, as Henry Cromwell once wrote from Ireland, depends less on forms of government than on the worthiness of the governors.

The great rivals within the Empire were of course Prussia and Austria. Prussia with 2,500,000 subjects—Poles, Prussians, and so forth—outside the Empire, over and above the same number within it, was reckoned the most powerful; for Frederick the Great had doubled its extent and resources, and by personal superintendence of every detail had administered it with extreme skill. But he had killed all initiative and independence in his subordinates; he had kept from them all secrets of policy, and had never advanced so far in regulation of his finance as to frame a budget. When he died in 1786, therefore, all order and system died with him. Every man had been trained to do what he was told, no man to consider what ought to be done. Moreover, Frederick's cynical want of principle had reacted disastrously upon public and private morality in Berlin society. The North Germans, for all their admirable power of laborious industry and painful thought, are subject to a singular deficiency in sound judgement. Even their deepest students—in such departments, for instance, as history and the fine arts—after expending vast diligence in ascertaining facts, will divert all the resources of their knowledge to the maintenance of some extravagant theory. They are as men who, having thought out an admirable

scheme of irrigation, planned all the works and traced out all the channels, suddenly turn the waters upon a single unexpected quarter and convert it into a swamp. The more superficial among them eagerly embrace such theories, whether they come from home or from abroad, rave about them with an extravagance that is to be found in no other country, and drive them to extremes. Frederick had no moral sense, but he had genius, prudence, and shrewd insight which led him, albeit by unscrupulous means and from purely selfish motives, to wise political conduct. His successors acknowledged his greatness, and could not help perceiving the lack of principle. They therefore assumed that the further they left their moral sense behind, the more surely they were advancing upon the road to grandeur; and they acted upon this hypothesis with enthusiastic thoroughness. In the domain of foreign policy they evolved, from the opulence of their cupidity, far-reaching designs for Prussian aggrandisement, all to be accomplished by a shameless diplomacy. Socially, this corruption had eaten so deeply into the heart of the capital that Sir James Harris declared, not without confirmation from other observers, that there was not an honest man nor a virtuous woman in Berlin.

But the Germans are at heart a moral people, and could not follow the evil way without frequent twinges of conscience. To banish these they took refuge in superstition. During the decadence of the old European system men nourished their hopes of better times to come by associating themselves in secret societies for the improvement of the human lot. The Freemasons were the most famous of these societies; and

it was from them, apparently, that there grew up in Bavaria the sect of the Illuminati, who, taking the now well worn formula of Liberty and Equality for their inspiration, aspired to reconstruct society from top to bottom. From pure reason they soon fell away into mysticism, and from mysticism into mummerly. It is the usual course of human affairs. To build with the intellect only is a task beyond the powers of ordinary mortals. They quickly drag in the senses to prop the structure; the original building soon falls to pieces; the props alone remain, and are mistaken for it. Charlatans sprang up in numbers, and presently an older society, the Rosicrucians, came forward to supersede the Illuminati. Their gospel was simpler. It was the mission of reigning princes, according to them, to regenerate humanity, and to that end to increase their power. To make this increase possible the Rosicrucians professed ability to transmute baser metal into gold and to direct the forces of nature. Doctrine and alchemy alike were very full of comfort to vain, ambitious, and impecunious princes. More than one such, Gustavus III of Sweden, for example, gave himself up wholly to these impostors, and nowhere were the Rosicrucians more powerful than in the Court of Frederick William II of Prussia. That Prince was a typical German of his time—a coarse, superstitious, sentimental sensualist, ruled by charlatans who flattered his vanity and ministered to his animal passions, while they fed his sickly mysticism with visions and voices from the dead. To calm his uneasy conscience, for his matrimonial arrangements would not have dishonoured an Oriental potentate, he substituted for the contemptuous tolerance of Frederick a



rigid censorship of all writings, philosophic, scientific, or political. In the public service he displaced his uncle's obedient clerks for creatures of his favourites, who possessed no more instruction and much less obedience. The results of his misrule were seen at once. Disorganization grew apace, not sparing even the much-vaunted Prussian army. Within five years of Frederick William's accession the Government and administration of Prussia had become rotten to the core, and were respected only as the creation of Frederick the Great.

Austria, then as now, was a huge disjointed body of many incoherent races and dissident tongues—Bohemians, Hungarians, Croats, Poles, and so forth—with outlying possessions, as we have seen, in Italy and the Low Countries. The chief ambition of the reigning house was the headship of the Empire; but here, and indeed everywhere except in Italy, Prussia barred the way to aggrandisement. The inextinguishable jealousy between the two nations was a commonplace known to every court in Europe; and it formed, as we shall see, the main obstacle to the success of the coalitions organized by Pitt against Revolutionary France. For two years, however, from 1790 to 1792, the Austrian Monarchy was governed by a cautious statesman, the Emperor Leopold. Had he lived longer the course of history might have been very different.

Adjoining Austria and Prussia lay the Republic of Poland, with 100,000 gentlemen for governors and none but serfs for subjects. The hundred thousand had a representative assembly in which nothing could be carried but by unanimity. The more enlightened

Poles wished to reform this insensate constitution ; not so their powerful neighbours, who did their utmost to maintain Polish anarchy as an excuse for stealing Polish territory. Already in 1772 Austria, Prussia, and Russia had laid violent hands upon a part of it. They were hungry for more, and it was impossible to foresee what complications might be brought about by their conflicting appetites.

Sweden, though at that time a much more formidable State than now, in virtue of her possession of Pomerania and Finland, had never recovered from the disastrous adventures of Charles XII, and was steadily declining. Her ruler, Gustavus III, had saved her from sharing the fate of Poland by depriving his factious and turbulent nobles of their ancient privileges, and arrogating all powers to himself. He did something towards the reform of abuses, but, though not without occasional flashes of generous chivalry, he was too vain and unstable to carry out the arduous work of reconstruction and reconstitution which his country needed. Kings, even as other mortals, are sometimes fond of advertising themselves, and the ambition of Gustavus was to cut a great figure in the world. He gained the reward of those who neglect prosaic duties for romantic enterprise.

Lastly, there was Catherine of Russia, sixty years old in 1789, but still in every sense Catherine the insatiable ; bent upon extending her territory in all directions—westward in Poland, southward in Turkey—and dreaming of a new Greek empire, where her grandson should reign as Emperor at Constantinople. It was her endeavour to realize this dream which brought about Pitt's second great diplomatic effort.

In 1788 she and Joseph of Austria fared forth to war against the Turks, and fought a very unsuccessful campaign, which brought them into great danger. Prussia, hoping to step in as an armed mediator and dictate peace to her own advantage, had fomented risings against Austria in Belgium and Hungary, and had stirred up both Poland and Sweden against Russia. Gustavus at once marched on St. Petersburg, and Catherine only saved herself by inciting a mutiny in Sweden, and by calling upon the Danes to cross the Swedish frontier. These manœuvres turned the scale against Gustavus, and it was only by a threat of armed intervention from England and Prussia that Sweden was delivered from extinction. Russian troops, meanwhile, pursued the siege of Otchakoff, which was taken by assault in December, 1788. The war continued for another year, England and Holland meanwhile working steadily to bring about a peace; and gradually the belligerents dropped off, exhausted. Austria and Turkey agreed to an armistice in August, 1790; ten days later Catherine concluded peace with Gustavus; and nothing remained but to close the contest between Russia and Turkey.

In the course of 1790 England had been brought to the verge of war with Spain owing to the seizure of two British vessels by Spaniards at Nootka Sound; and at the time Pitt had reminded Prussia of her obligations to Great Britain under the treaty of alliance. Frederick William had responded heartily; and now he called upon England in return to back him in requiring Catherine to make peace with the Turks, and to yield up to them all conquests acquired during the war. Pitt agreed; and preparations were made



to equip a large fleet for the Baltic. But Catherine rejected with contempt the British offers of mediation ; and, when the question of the augmentation of the Navy came before Parliament, it met with opposition so strenuous that Pitt was fain to withdraw it, and to recall an ultimatum which was on its way to St. Petersburg. Catherine triumphantly carried her point as to Otchakoff ; and Prussia was so much hurt and annoyed that she practically withdrew from the alliance.

This was a sharp rebuff for Pitt ; and his biographers find it difficult to account for his miscalculations. Catherine's financial resources, it is true, were absolutely exhausted, but she was not a person likely to yield readily to threats. King George, in fact, never supposed that she would ; and Pitt, for that matter, was prepared to back his menaces by force of arms. But, once again, it was hardly likely that England, just recovering its prosperity after a long and exhausting war, would wish to renew its troubles for the sake of a Turkish fortress. The King was strongly for peace ; so was William Grenville, the Home Secretary ; so was Lord Auckland, Ambassador at the Hague, a valued friend and counsellor. All this force of opinion might have warned Pitt, and yet he evidently counted upon carrying his policy through the House of Commons. Were Catherine's agents, then, at work among honourable Members ? There were ugly stories to that effect, but they cannot be proved. It seems almost incredible, and yet it is certain, that within a few weeks of Pitt's humiliation Mr. Adair appeared at the Court of St. Petersburg, and was treated with ostentatious favour by Catherine as the friend of Fox. It was

noticed, too, that the Russian Ministers, after Adair's arrival, assumed a most insolent tone towards King George's envoy; and it seems to be absolutely unquestionable that Adair himself held language towards the Empress which was calculated to strengthen her in resisting any concession to England. Indeed, Adair was extremely disappointed when, for reasons which shall presently appear, she declared herself contented with Otchakoff and ready to abandon further pretensions. Adair always represented himself as an independent traveller, but the British envoy at St. Petersburg and William Grenville were both convinced that he was Fox's emissary; and the fact that he used a cipher in his correspondence strengthens the supposition. The entire subject is obscure, and I do not think that the mystery has yet been wholly cleared up, nor perhaps ever will be. I believe myself that for once Pitt was disposed to launch out into a great enterprise after his father's manner—that, in fact, the Pitt had for once got the better of the Grenville in him, and that, in his ignorance of the world, he trusted to high words to carry him somehow through all difficulties. If so, he was cured of this weakness once for all.

The immediate result of the business was that the Duke of Leeds resigned the Foreign Office, which was taken over by Pitt's cousin, William Grenville. Born in the same year with Pitt himself, Grenville had been one of those promising boys whose portraits, even as those of Fox and of Grenville's intimate friend Lord Wellesley, had been thought worthy a place on the walls of the Provost's House at Eton. He was probably a sounder scholar than either Pitt or Fox, spoke French so well that in France he had been mistaken for a

native, was nearly as good a master of Italian, and had not neglected Spanish. He had also made a careful study of geography, which was a rare accomplishment in a Cabinet Minister. Intellectually, upon the whole, he was far above the average. But he was a true Grenville of the better type, very upright, very conscientious, very able, very resolute, very courageous. It may be objected that his integrity did not debar him from the enjoyment of sinecures, but I do not think that this should be urged against him or against any of his contemporaries. Even Pitt gratefully accepted the Wardenship of the Cinque Ports, when the King intimated that he would hear of no refusal; and he was quite right. A political career is expensive; and it is hard that a poor but able man, who sacrifices a large private income to pursue it, should not receive some compensation. In these days we carry our horror of sinecures and of pensions to excess; with the result that we compel men to cling to their official salaries often at the sacrifice of their own convictions, and it may be even to their own political degradation. This, it seems to me, is an evil greater than the existence of sinecures, and, financially, far more costly to the country. Doubtless, both sinecures and pensions should be carefully distributed and their holders jealously watched; but, on the other hand, a man who gives up, say, a legal practice worth £15,000 a year, to attend to the country's business should not suffer punishment for it.

But Grenville unfortunately possessed other failings far more serious than his willingness to enjoy a sinecure. For a man of knowledge so wide he could be singularly narrow; and he was always difficult, uncom-



promising, and unsympathetic, with little sense of the ridiculous, small knowledge of men, and singular incapacity, as he himself admitted, for dealing with them. Moreover, when once fairly launched into opposition he seemed to lose all sense of moderation and to become even more narrow than before, as well as blind and intolerant. Nor did he appear to understand that violent public utterances might alienate friends for whom, in all but matters political, he preserved the warmest esteem and even affection.

In private life he was without reproach, though never genial. The only really human things that I know about him are that he was a ringleader in a rebellion at Eton, and that at Oxford he 'made hay' (for a bet) of a friend's rooms in an incredibly small number of minutes. He married Anne Pitt, the sister of the last Lord Camelford, who was, after her brother's death in a duel, the last relic of the elder line of Pitts, and who lived to so great an age as to be remembered by people still living. They had no children, which was perhaps fortunate, for the strain of madness in the Pitt family showed itself, as I have said, in the last Lord Camelford as downright insanity. Children born of such a stock would probably have been unmanageable, especially by a stern, narrow, and austere father. Upon the whole Grenville was not an amiable man. I have read his love-letters. I have read hundreds of other letters from him to all sorts and conditions of men; I have read his classical notebooks; I have read prayers and essays of his composition. I am privileged to know better than others the beautiful home which he made for himself, its matchless shrubs and garden, its excellent library with the choicest produc-

tions of the Clarendon Press ; and I find always more than commands admiration and respect, but nothing that inspires affection. And so it was during his life. Few men enjoyed higher esteem, still fewer could evoke less love.

Grenville had hardly taken over the Foreign Office before affairs in Eastern Europe were unexpectedly complicated through a revolution in Poland, whereby that hapless country sought to end the anarchy, which had brought it to ruin, by fundamental reforms. On the 3rd of May, 1791, the Diet, in spite of furious opposition from the Russian party, voted a new Constitution, namely, an hereditary monarch, a diet composed of an upper and lower chamber, in which laws were to be passed by plurality of votes, and responsible ministers. All was done in seven hours ; and the affair came as a shock to Germany and Russia, whose traditional policy it was to maintain anarchy in Poland. Catherine had been so busy fighting the Swedes and Turks that she had for the moment neglected Poland. She hastily closed the Eastern question by deferring to the wishes of England in the matter of the terms to be granted to the Turks, and began to mass troops upon the Polish frontier. It was now her great object to entangle Austria and Prussia in the affairs of France, and, when they were fully occupied, to step in and appropriate Poland.

You may judge that while all these very serious matters were going forward in the East, Europe had very little leisure to attend to the Revolution in France. It was running the course with which we are familiar, party after party using the mob of Paris to overawe their opponents and to gain their temporary

ends, always imagining that the mob was their servant and not their master. Nevertheless, the sixth article of the Constitution of 1790 proclaimed renunciation of all wars of conquest and of any employment of the French forces against the liberty of another people; and this had done much to reassure neighbouring nations. England in particular accepted this manifesto in the good faith with which it was voted by the Assembly. Yet it was in England that almost simultaneously, in the middle of 1790, the cry of alarm was first raised. Burke looked beyond the pious and perfectly genuine professions of the Constituent Assembly, beheld its acts, and asked how anything but mischief could come of reforms which swept away at a blow every trace and every tradition of the old order, and substituted for them nothing but empty formulae of the rights of man and the sovereignty of the people. He foresaw that these wild doctrines would, unless suppressed, spread confusion in Europe; and in his letters he adjured the Court of France to hold no parley with the rebels, but to call in the armies of Europe and exterminate them.

This last was mere raving, but the *Reflections on the French Revolution* were more serious. They inspired the majority of Englishmen with a bitter hatred of the new opinions, and awoke many, William Windham among others, who were toying with them, to a sense of their true meaning. To this day ardent advocates of democracy have never forgiven Burke for that pamphlet. Pitt, however, never lost his head for a moment. England was highly prosperous at the time, and he wisely looked upon the continuance of that prosperity as the best means of stifling discontent.



He found ways to assure the French Government unofficially that England asked nothing better than to leave France alone, and to be left alone in turn. Grenville was, if possible, even more determined than Pitt as to the expediency of abstaining from interference with France, and of a peaceful policy in all quarters. The King was wholly of Grenville's mind, and on that account welcomed him to the Foreign Office. Lord Auckland, at the Hague, worked steadily and with success to inspire the same feelings in our Dutch allies. Prussia, under the guidance of Frederick William and his contemptible satellites, would have liked to take advantage of French weakness; but the Emperor Leopold was resolute against any intervention in French affairs, except with the concert of all the Great Powers, and to such concert Pitt firmly refused to commit England. Altogether, Grenville hoped to steer his country clear of war; and was so sanguine as to believe for a brief period that Poland had eluded the grasp of Catherine.

Meanwhile, however, the Revolution pursued its course and began to show its nature more clearly. Religious intolerance at home and active aggression abroad now became its characteristics, with results that soon led to civil war in La Vendée, and to general war in Europe. Prussia and Austria drew more closely together to meet this aggression; but, before hostilities could begin, three notable events followed each other swiftly in March 1792. On the 1st of that month the Emperor Leopold died, leaving the empire to his son Francis, a young man of twenty-four, with no political experience, an exceedingly narrow intellect, and an overpowering aversion from innovation of any kind.

On the 16th, Gustavus of Sweden was assassinated, and the crown devolved upon Gustavus the Fourth. In the same month Charles the Fourth of Spain displaced the best of his respectable advisers, and raised Godoy to supreme power. It is not easy to overrate the importance of these events, coming as they did at so critical a time. The French had proclaimed the Sovereignty of the People. The rest of Europe stood for the Sovereignty of Kings. A trial of strength between the two was inevitable; and by a most singular coincidence most of the reigning sovereigns were almost, if not quite, of unsound mind. Catherine of Russia was indeed a woman of most remarkable ability, and, though on one side she was absolutely devoid of moral restraint, it would be absurd to excuse her by the hypothesis of madness. Her successor, Paul, however, was a madman, and paid for the failing with his life. King Christian of Denmark was subject to intermittent attacks of dementia, though his son the Regent, Frederick the Sixth, was strong and capable. Queen Marie of Portugal was so hopelessly mad that she was kept under restraint. Her son, the Regent John, a miserable, timid, and ill-educated creature, was utterly unfit for his position. Gustavus the Fourth of Sweden was a lunatic, neither more nor less; and his lunacy brought ruin to his country. Charles the Fourth of Spain was little more than half-witted. Ferdinand of Naples, his brother, was scarcely better. Finally, Lewis the Sixteenth of France, though not of unsound was at any rate of slow and stunted intellect. Of the rest, Victor Amadeus of Sardinia, Francis of Austria, and Frederick William of Prussia were such poor creatures as we have seen them to be; and even

King George of England, the only sovereign who could be named with Catherine for character and ability, was destined to end his life with long years of insanity.

When such were the representatives of kings in Europe it was difficult to defend their cause dialectically, particularly when the young democracy of America could be appealed to on the other side. But, worse than this, it was impossible to marshal the forces of the kings, and to put forth the strength of their peoples aright for physical conflict. Where the leaders are weak, the followers must be lukewarm. A man of no greater calibre than George the Third at the head of Spain or of Prussia would never have allowed the Revolution Militant to make such an advance as it did. To the very end the most formidable rival among sovereigns whom Napoleon encountered was a very mediocre man, Alexander of Russia. The remainder were mere children. The Houses of Hohenzollern, Habsburg-Lorraine, and Savoy have all produced great sovereigns since that day; so it must not be said that their stocks were worn out. There have also been able men among the Bourbons; indeed there was one alive at that time who, as Lewis the Eighteenth of France, showed considerable capacity as a constitutional monarch. It can only be said, therefore, that this amazing abundance of half-witted sovereigns was one of the many fortunate accidents which allowed the French Revolution to gather so much headway.

The opening campaign of the Revolution Militant was ludicrously disgraceful. A French rabble invaded the Austrian Netherlands, and fled away screaming at



the first shot. The forces of Austria and Prussia then assembled to march upon Paris, furiously jealous of each other, but still strong enough to overthrow any French force upon their way. They were stopped, but not by a French army. No sooner had they crossed the frontier than Catherine invaded Poland. With such a diversion in their rear, the Austrians and Prussians could not advance. Men cannot move forward when they are looking back over their shoulders; and Austria could never move towards the French frontier, from the beginning to the end of the war, without such anxious glances backward. In the present instance the invaders greeted the first serious obstacle that they met with as a good excuse for making their retreat, and retreat they did. Grenville hugged himself over his wisdom in keeping England clear of so ridiculous a failure; but he rejoiced too soon. The mob of Paris met the invasion by the sack of the Tuileries on the 10th of August, by the imprisonment of the King, and by the wholesale massacres of the 2nd to the 6th of September.

Nevertheless, the rulers of France still sought friendship with England. They even tried to bribe her by the cession of Tobago, and by the offer to share with her the commerce of South America, after helping those settlements to throw off the yoke of Spain. Such overtures could of course lead to nothing; and yet Grenville, and even more Auckland, still hoped against hope for a general pacification, whereby France should be left severely alone by all the rest of Europe. But France would have no such thing. The Convention declared war virtually upon all nations, and at the end of the year made open preparations for a descent upon

England. The rulers of France did not realize that Poland had saved them, but were utterly reckless. By the end of 1792 even Grenville was obliged to confess that war was inevitable. On the 3rd of February it came, not by the declaration of England, but of France ; and Pitt was condemned, practically to the end of his life, to be a Minister of War.

## LECTURE III

WAR is commonly supposed to be a matter for generals or admirals, in the camp, or at sea. It would be as reasonable to say that a duel is a matter for pistols or swords. Generals with their armies and admirals with their fleets are mere weapons wielded by the hand of the statesman. It is for him to decide when to strike, where to strike, and how to strike; and to enable him to strike truly and effectually he must first know definitely and exactly what object he wishes to attain by striking. It is not enough to aim random blows with the vague hope of inflicting some injury somewhere. First the strength and temper of one's own weapons must be carefully estimated, then the strength of the enemy's; and the operations must then be so planned and directed that every stroke shall contribute towards the final disablement of the adversary. It need hardly be added that it is the duty of the statesman to keep his weapons, the Navy and the Army, in good order; first, by providing sufficient money for their maintenance, and secondly, by entrusting the care of them to competent hands. If he neglects this prime duty, he is not only no statesman; he is a Minister who has betrayed his trust.

Let us glance at the Navy and Army of England in 1792. Pitt during the eight years of his rule had devoted, as we have seen, much time and energy to the improvement of the general administrative



machinery of his country. In his dealings with Ireland and with Parliamentary Reform he had been thwarted. In the matters of commerce and finance he had accomplished very much, and no praise can be too high for this great and priceless service. The strengthening of public confidence, which means the fortifying of public credit, is as truly preparation for a successful war as foundation for a prosperous peace. It represents the power to purchase a good weapon and the strength to use it during a long contest.

But the power to purchase a good weapon, and the actual possession of that weapon, are two very different things. An army or a navy needs time for the making, time even for altering and repairing. If you have a sword you may at least use it as a dagger, if it be broken off short. But if you have only a dagger, and try to beat it out and lengthen it into a sword, you will produce but a thin, weak, untrustworthy, short-lived blade, as useless for cutting or thrusting as for stabbing. It is not too much to say that Pitt, throughout his administration, had studiously neglected both the Navy and the Army. It may be urged with some justice that, with the vast burden of work which lay already upon his shoulders, he had no time to look to them; but their condition was so dangerous that the excuse cannot be accepted. The chief mischief in both services was that the pay of the men was insufficient. In the Army, where enlistment was voluntary, the result showed itself in practical stoppage of the supply of recruits, with an enormous amount of desertion, and, consequently, in attenuated or empty ranks in all regiments. The private soldier had, in fact, no alternative but to starve or desert, for his pay was too

slight to keep him alive. This is no exaggeration, but the literal truth. Yet Pitt took no notice of the matter whatever. In 1787 he made a contract with the Landgrave of Hesse that in return for a subsidy, a force of 12,000 Hessians should be ready for him at any time on demand; and to these mercenaries he trusted for any emergency. Not till January, 1792, was a small pittance granted to ameliorate the lot of the British soldier, and then only by direct intervention of the King.

The state of the Navy was even worse. As you know, there was in those days no body of sailors permanently attached to the service of the King. On the outbreak of a war, an embargo was laid upon all merchant shipping; the crews were impressed and carried on board the men-of-war; and so the fleet was manned. The abuses in respect of pay were quite as great as in the Army, with the additional hardship that men had no choice but to endure them. Every shift was of course practised to evade the press, with the consequence that the Navy could not find its complement of men without robbing the Army. Such seamen as were caught for service were naturally and pardonably discontented and insubordinate. We know something of the result in the great mutiny at Spithead and the Nore in 1797; but we do not realize that there was sporadic mutiny in all quarters until 1798, and far more than we are aware of even until the end of the war.

In the matter of officers the Navy possessed three admirals of great reputation—Lord Howe, Lord Hood, and Sir John Jervis—the two first rather worn with age, and the second not only old but impracticable.

Of promising captains there was great abundance, the most prominent being Horatio Nelson and Cuthbert Collingwood. The Army also, thanks chiefly to experience gained in America, was not without a fair number of competent generals—Ralph Abercromby, Cornwallis, David Dundas, Charles Grey, James Harris, Charles Stuart, Lord Moira, James Craig—with several promising colonels, of whom John Moore had the greatest reputation.

Now you will read in Lord Rosebery's book that 'our Army relatively to those on the Continent was respectable and even powerful'. Power and respectability are relative terms; but, as a matter of fact, after providing for the police of the kingdom (which in those days depended wholly on the military forces) and for the manning of the fleet, Pitt could not have put 20,000 efficient men into the field within twelve months of the declaration of war. Lord Rosebery goes on to explain the success of the Navy and the failure of the Army during the earlier part of the war by a still more astonishing statement. 'The Army', he says, 'was essentially an aristocratic and the Navy a comparatively democratic service. In the Navy a man of obscure origin could rise, and the area of choice was not limited by the circumstances of birth; but in the Army purchase and favour and lineage gave promotion. Collingwood was the son of a Newcastle merchant, Jervis of a country lawyer, Nelson of a country parson . . . A military command seemed to require nothing more than exalted rank, or the seniority which often spelt senility.'

It is to be lamented that so accomplished and well-read an author should have set down seriously so



ludicrous a travesty of the truth. Of the two services the Navy was, if anything, the more aristocratic, being the more honoured of the twain; and it is notorious that promotion depended chiefly upon interest. You can read it in every page of Marryat's novels; and you can read it, before Marryat, in Smollett's *Roderick Random*. It is melancholy to peruse, as I have perused, the pathetic letters of admirals and captains, recommending again and again officers of tried valour and capacity, whose advancement has been repeatedly neglected; and to contrast their fate with the ready promotion given to the relations and dependents of political magnates. Of course obscure officers could rise by sheer merit in the Navy; but so they could in the Army also. David Dundas, who became Commander-in-Chief, walked from Edinburgh to Woolwich to seek an appointment in the Artillery. John Moore was the son of a Glasgow doctor, Ralph Abercromby the son of a Scottish lawyer. It is, however, remarkable that the best officers of the Army, taking the war from first to last, came chiefly from gentle and noble houses. Charles Grey, later the first Earl Grey, was of a very old Northumberland family; Rowland Hill sprang from a good old stock in Cheshire; Cornwallis and Moira were of course peers; Charles Stuart, John Hope, and Arthur Wellesley, sons of peers. But banish from your heads this strange idea about the Army being aristocratic and the Navy democratic, and that therefore the one failed and the other succeeded. I wish to say nothing discourteous; but it is sheer absurdity. The true reasons for the success of the one and the failure of the other were, as we shall see, very different.

Let us now turn to the weapons of the enemy. The French Navy was destroyed at the outset by the frenzy of the Revolutionists. Every officer was driven from the service as an aristocrat ; and a navy once destroyed is not easily reconstructed. Throughout the war the French fleet never recovered from this initial blow delivered by its own countrymen. Being the weaker at the beginning, it was blockaded in its own harbours by our superior fleets, and could not learn its business in blue water. Add to this the disorganization of the dockyards, which even Napoleon failed to set right, and you will understand why the French Admirals, brave and devoted men though they were, could feel no confidence in ships, men, or officers when they put to sea. Far be it from me to detract from the glory of our Navy, but the fleets that were met by Howe and Nelson were not to be compared to those which met ours, not infrequently with success, during the years of the American War.

The French Army had equally been dissolved, and vast numbers of its officers driven into exile. A goodly number, however, especially in the artillery, remained, having embraced the popular side ; and an army is more easily made than a navy. Young men of spirit were glad to leave the frightful anarchy in France behind them, and go to meet their country's enemies on the frontier ; many of them felt a very genuine enthusiasm for the cause of the people against kings ; and, since practically all started on the same level, all had the same opportunities for gaining distinction. It must not, however, be thought that the raw levies of the French in the earlier stages of the war were better than other levies of the same kind ; for they were not.

After a certain amount of fighting they improved rapidly; but at the outset, as we have seen, they ran away in panic at the first shot, and even later a handful of steady, disciplined British troops would cheerfully meet and easily disperse three times their own number of French. If Pitt had really possessed a powerful army, as Lord Rosebery says;—if, for instance, he could have landed sixty thousand men in the Scheldt in the spring of 1793, I have little doubt that they might have marched straight to Paris. It was just because he had no army that Pitt fell into difficulties over his military policy.

I have said that the first thing for a statesman to decide, upon going to war, is the object which he wishes to attain; and the second, the best means for attaining it. What was the great object in 1793? Obviously to repress the aggressive spirit of France bred by the disorders, enthusiasms, and visionary schemes of the Revolution. This meant the repression of Revolutionary violence and the restoration of an orderly government which should not declare all treaties to be waste paper, all kings to be usurpers, all governing classes to be tyrants, all existing governments to be wicked, and all peoples bound in honour, duty, and civic virtue to overthrow everybody and everything and to embrace each other fraternally upon the ruins. What form that orderly government should take was to Pitt himself probably a matter of indifference. He was quite prepared to recognize the Republic; but the other powers of Europe were certainly in favour of re-establishing the Monarchy, which, combined with the Constitution of 1791, was likely on the whole to be the most stable and satisfactory arrangement.



The first thing to be done, therefore, was to march to Paris and overthrow the Revolutionary Government. How was this to be accomplished? France having declared war upon all countries, all countries were preparing to invade her from all points of the compass. But the most promising army to which England could send her contingent was that which Austria was assembling to drive the invading French from the Netherlands, and to which, moreover, Prussia had promised to join some of her own troops. Or, if England preferred to act by herself in co-operation, but not in company, with the Continental armies, the counter-revolutionary insurrection had just broken out in La Vendée. As a rule it is a mistake to base military operations upon the revolt of a section of the population, but this revolt was an exception. It was not only Royalist but religious. The enthusiasm of these insurgents for their ancient faith was fully as great as that of the Republicans for the rights of man. They had their natural leaders in the resident gentry; to say nothing of others, fully as able and as resolute, who had sprung from the lower ranks; and one and all were brave and determined men. To abet these would be to enable a party of the French to re-establish a government for themselves, which would be far less invidious than restoring the Monarchy solely by foreign bayonets. And, moreover, that party was a worthy party, for its members made the finest fight against the Revolution that was fought by any nation, country, or language. Again, the British were the right people to join with the Vendéans, for they were struggling as a nation to repel wanton aggression, not as sovereigns or heads of dynasties, as was the case with Austria

and Prussia, to repress unsavoury opinions or to uphold inefficient autocracy. They had never conspired against the Revolution. In its earlier and useful stages they had very generally sympathized with it. The orderly elements, that is to say the great majority, of the French people, need not have been afraid to rally round them and the Vendéans for the overthrow of the party of anarchy. ✓

And here we must notice the enormous mischief which Fox did to his country at this crisis. In the course of 1792 long negotiations had taken place ✓ between Pitt and the Moderate Whigs as to the fusion of the two parties to strengthen the country in the moment of danger. Pitt, as we have seen, was even prepared to give Fox charge of the Foreign Office after a few months of delay; but Fox, who showed extreme ill-temper over the whole affair, would hear of nothing but a Whig Prime Minister. If the Duke of Portland had been a man of any resolution he would have abjured Fox then and there, and joined Pitt with his own followers, as he did ultimately in 1794. As ✓ things were, he allowed Fox to wreck the negotiations, and stood aside. Now Portland's followers were for the most part disciples of Burke; and Burke had throughout adjured the Government to intervene in favour of the Royalists. He saw no advantage in putting down the Revolutionary Government unless a stable successor were set in its place; and therefore he was strongly for a restoration of the legitimate line, and to ✓ that end was for seconding the Royalists with all the power of England.

The French Royalists were of three classes. First there were the malcontents, including the princes of

the blood royal, who had no idea but to return to the old order in its entirety, and with that object had emigrated early to call in foreign aid. Pitt and Grenville had full information about them from private sources, and knew them to be for the most part vain, foolish, flighty, unteachable, and undesirable. The second class were the perfectly innocent, respectable, and harmless officers who, having sworn allegiance to the King, conceived their duty to be to him, and had been hounded out of the country for no other crime. They were martyrs for conscience' sake, nothing more nor less. Lastly, there were the true Royalists militant of La Vendée, than whom there were no finer fellows in France. Pitt and Grenville seem to have judged of all French Royalists by the spoiled children of the first emigration. Burke lent to all Royalists the virtue which was only to be found in La Vendée, and his followers were strongly for supporting all French Royalists whatever. Had they joined the Government in 1792 they would certainly have insisted upon sending help at once to the Vendean leaders; and such help, given in 1793, would have come in time, and might have changed the course of history.

Pitt knew nothing whatever about war, and therefore fell almost wholly under the influence of Dundas as to the manner of conducting it. Dundas also knew nothing whatever about war, but he had a very shrewd idea of what would please the people at the next election. He therefore bent all the military resources of England towards the acquisition of French possessions, which would make a brave show in the *Gazette*, and could be held as security for reimbursement of the cost of the war when the Monarchy should be restored.



Royalist refugees, some of them honest men, others consummate rogues, pressed above all for a British occupation of the French West Indies, and in particular of St. Domingo, the wealth of which exceeded that of all the rest of the Antilles put together. This was just the scheme to attract Dundas. The capture of St. Domingo would be popular—a good advertisement, as the phrase goes—would rejoice the hearts of the mercantile community and—a great temptation to Pitt—would bring money into the Exchequer. The only objections to it were that the operations would infallibly be very costly in human lives, and that they would contribute not in the least to the disablement of France.

As it happened, the first troops that Pitt sent across the sea were dispatched to Holland, where, owing to the apathy of the people and the helplessness of the Stadtholder, the country professed itself unable to repel a French invasion. It is worthy of notice as a comment upon our 'respectable and powerful Army' that only with the greatest difficulty could five thousand men be scraped together in two months for this service, and that even a third of these were raw and useless recruits. Originally these men were not intended to stay on the Continent at all. They drifted to the Low Countries in the first instance, and ultimately were placed, together with the King's Hanoverian troops and some few thousand Hessians, under the command of the Duke of York to join the Austrian Army of the Netherlands in an invasion of France. But Pitt only consented to place this force under the Austrian commander-in-chief on condition that the first operations undertaken should be the siege of Dunkirk. It was a repetition of the old wretched mistake. There was no advantage

whatever in taking Dunkirk except that, as Pitt told Lord Spencer, it was a port, and so near as to 'give a good impression of the war in England'.<sup>1</sup> But a port on the coast of La Vendée would have been infinitely more valuable and not a vast deal more remote. Probably there was some idea of holding Dunkirk as a pledge for repayment of the expenses of the war; but even so the siege contributed nothing towards the attainment of the object of the war, and was therefore, from a military point of view, to the last degree vicious and wrong. Moreover, the manifest selfishness of such a policy damaged us in the eyes of our allies, and set them a most pernicious example.

Retribution followed at once. The siege of Dunkirk was a failure, and that failure wrecked the entire campaign. Moreover, the mishap was due not to the Duke of York, as is generally supposed, but to the omission of the Government to send gunboats to assist in the siege. The Duke himself very handsomely begged that his friends would not attempt to justify him, lest they should weaken the Government; and it was not until the question of his recall was mooted, in 1794, that the King declared that his son was blamed for the shortcomings of the Admiralty on this occasion. Lord Rosebery dismisses this contention with a sneer, insinuating that the King was overcome by the folly of a doting father; yet papers, that were unpublished when Lord Rosebery wrote, prove that old George the Third was perfectly right. He understood military affairs much better than either Pitt or Dundas, and never dreamed of an attack upon Dunkirk except with

<sup>1</sup> Lord Spencer to Windham, Nov. 11, 1793, B.M. *Add. MS.* 37844.

the co-operation of a naval force, whereas his Ministers declared to the last moment that they knew of no necessity for such co-operation.<sup>1</sup> Dundas was seized with a panic of dismay when the bad news came, but Pitt received it with composure, though the misfortune was aggravated for him by the fact that his brother, Lord Chatham, was in charge of the Admiralty. 'It will be too much, I doubt, to expect of Mr. Pitt that he will have courage enough to sacrifice his brother if he be really to blame,' wrote Lord Spencer at this time to Windham, 'and if he does not sacrifice him, I should be almost afraid in the circumstances of his falling himself.' Pitt did not sacrifice his brother. He possessed the still higher courage to take all blame upon himself. 'If he does fall,' continued Lord Spencer, 'where are we to look to supply his place?' There was Pitt's strength. The alternative to himself was Fox and his following, who, (I still quote Lord Spencer) 'if they are in truth acting upon principle, would lead us, for all I know, to the horrors and miseries of France.'<sup>2</sup>

Meanwhile, by good luck, a diversion came to distract attention from Dunkirk. A counter-revolution had sprung up in the south, and the French Royalists had delivered Toulon to Lord Hood. This was a prize indeed, for Toulon was the great French naval station in the Mediterranean; and, quite apart from the advantage of depriving the Revolutionists of the use of it, safe access to a French harbour was of the first importance to any British expedition to France. 'The possession of Toulon', wrote Pitt to Windham at this

<sup>1</sup> *Dropmore Papers*, ii. 387.

<sup>2</sup> Spencer to Windham, Sept. 18, 1793, B.M. *Add. MS.* 37844.



time, 'seems to me to furnish a better opening than could have presented itself in any other way for the restoration of the Government of France and for terminating the war, satisfactorily, perhaps speedily. The check before Dunkirk is certainly to be regretted, but . . . the mischief will I trust be little felt in the general scale of the war.'<sup>1</sup> After this you would have supposed that Pitt would have abandoned all other projects, and sent every British soldier that he could raise to Toulon. He did nothing of the kind. He had destined all available British troops for the capture of sugar-islands in the West Indies, and he and Dundas would not spare a man for any other object. A few British troops, who were doing marines' duty in Hood's fleet, were set ashore to hold Toulon, together with a few Sardinians, and a rabble of Neapolitans and Spaniards, who had been sent there at the urgent request of England. Pitt had asked Sir Charles Grey how many soldiers would be required to hold the captured port, and had been answered, 'not fewer than fifty thousand of the best.' Pitt rejoined that he thought the duty could be fulfilled by a smaller number; and he left the place to the guard of not more than three thousand serviceable men. This small handful was of course easily driven out by vastly superior numbers, and betook itself to Corsica, where the Royalists had once again invited a British occupation. With some difficulty and after some sharp fighting the Republicans were dislodged from the fortifications; the island was taken; and King George was proclaimed King of Corsica. The dispatches of the commanders made brave reading in

<sup>1</sup> Pitt to Windham, Oct. 13, 1793, B.M. *Add. MS.* 37844.

the *Gazette*, but France was very little the worse. Nor again was England any the better; rather the contrary, for she was obliged to keep a large garrison and a fleet to protect the island, lest the French, being close at hand, should attack it in overwhelming force.

Meanwhile, in 1794 a second campaign was undertaken in Flanders, under very discouraging auspices; for the Austrians, knowing that Russia and Prussia had agreed to partition Poland, were anxious to step in and take their share. Brilliant actions were indeed fought in which the British troops distinguished themselves; but on the day of decisive battle the Austrian commanders deliberately disposed their forces so that the British should be isolated and overpowered. This was the first step towards the desertion of their Allies and of Flanders, which was finally accomplished a few weeks later. Prussia meanwhile, though subsidized by England, evaded all claims to supply the troops which she had promised. In the desperate hope of saving Holland, Dundas raised the British army under the Duke of York to the number of thirty thousand—bad soldiers under bad officers, for reasons that shall presently be explained. But the French were in very great force. The Dutch would not move a finger to protect their own country; and after much fighting and a retreat only less disastrous on its own scale than Napoleon's at Moscow, the British were driven to the mouth of the Ems, where they embarked early in 1795 for England.

The blame for this disaster is laid upon the Duke of York. 'When', says Lord Rosebery, 'our armies had to be sent into the field, it was necessary that, if

possible, a prince of the blood should command them. A military command seemed to require nothing more than exalted rank or the seniority which often spelt senility. It is difficult', he adds, 'to apportion the bloodguiltiness of this proceeding or tradition.' As a matter of fact it is not very difficult, for there is no question of bloodguiltiness in the matter. Princes of the blood never took command of a British army in the field except on the continent of Europe, and in cases where Hanoverian, Hessian, or other mercenaries were serving with the British. The sole reason for thus appointing a prince was to avoid disputes about subordination between the officers of the various nations. You will remember that in the campaign of 1704 Marlborough only commanded the army on every other day. When Hanoverians were concerned, the presence of a prince of the blood was especially important; for he was a prince of their blood as well as of the British, and was looked upon by them as one of themselves. The only exception to this rule is the campaign of the Duke of Cumberland in Scotland in 1745-6; but even there foreign troops were serving with him under foreign princes of high rank, who would have made difficulties over obedience to an ordinary British officer. It may be remembered that, when the Duke of Cumberland was recalled from Germany in 1758, it was necessary to appoint a reigning Prince, Ferdinand of Brunswick, to take his place, exalted rank being in the circumstances essential to supreme authority. The whole arrangement was in fact one of convenience. The advantage of undisputed command was in itself so great as to outweigh other disadvantages; and those disadvantages were



neutralized, as far as possible, by giving the prince of the blood the best adviser that could be found as chief of his staff. The Duke of York, as a matter of fact, did not command the troops in Flanders to the end of the campaign; and, no sooner had he been recalled, than there broke out between the British and Hanoverian Generals disputes so furious as greatly to aggravate the difficulties of the retreat.

At the same time it would be idle to pretend that either the Duke of Cumberland or the Duke of York shone as commanders in the field, for they did not. It is true that neither of them ever undertook a campaign abroad except with inferior numbers; and that the Duke of York, even so, gained two or three actions which were very highly creditable to him and to his troops. But these considerations do not alter the fact that he was a bad general on active service; and Lord Rosebery does not fail to record with some emphasis that Pitt insisted on recalling him. Pitt did so insist, and beyond doubt he was quite right.

But what manner of ~~an~~ army had the Duke of York? That is a question which is studiously ignored; but I am not going to ignore it, for it throws fresh light upon the administration of Pitt and Dundas. Having, through Pitt's fault, no army when the war began, Ministers of course found it necessary to improvise one as rapidly as possible. Owing to the starvation of the soldier during the first eight years of Pitt's administration, recruits were difficult to obtain; and, since a great many were wanted, the duumvirate (as Windham called Pitt and Dundas) fell back on a very mischievous device which Chatham had adopted, with most evil results, during his short tenure of office.

This device was to offer commissions, varying in rank from ensign to colonel, to any man who would bring his one, two, three or five hundred recruits. Rich speculators bought the required recruits for their sons from the crimps at so much a head; and mere children became at a bound lieutenant-colonels. The men so procured were infamous, and the officers not much better. Moreover, being lieutenant-colonels, these boys of eighteen on coming out to the Netherlands took rank above experienced captains of long service, and commanded battalions and even brigades over their heads. This naturally gave rise to bitter discontent among the older officers, who had been fighting since the beginning of the war. The newcomers knew nothing of their duty, and had no idea of enforcing discipline either upon their bad and untrained soldiers or upon themselves. And it was with an army so composed that the Duke was called upon to execute a series of delicate and dangerous retrograde movements in the face of overwhelming superiority of numbers. Not unnaturally he failed; and it is difficult to say what general would in the circumstances have succeeded. There is the fact of the matter; and if you will not believe my testimony, I will give you that of William Windham, who was sent on a mission to the army in September, 1794. 'I doubt', he wrote to Pitt, 'if even the Archduke Charles in supreme command could put matters right. The evil lies, as much as anything, in the domestic economy and discipline of this particular army.' And he added, 'I love and respect the Duke of York more and more, the more I see of him.'<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Windham to Pitt, Sept. 16, 1794, B.M. *Add. MS.* 37844.

It would have been well if the mischief thus bred had ended with the Duke of York's disastrous retreat ; but unfortunately it did not. The mistake was made, and could not be set right. The internal economy of the army was altogether upset by it, and its evil consequences were felt to the very end of the war. Moreover, this blunder was supplemented by another. For the defence of the kingdom, Ministers had power by law to pass all the manhood of the nation by ballot through the militia. Instead of doing this, they granted exemption from the ballot to all men who would enrol themselves in corps of volunteers. Instantly there was a rush to form little companies of Volunteers, each independent of the others, without any general organization, all incoherent, all jealous, all undisciplined, and all useless.

Thus the forces, both at home and abroad, were thoroughly demoralized, and meanwhile bad news began to come from the West Indies. The old troops first sent out there did their work brilliantly, captured Martinique, Guadeloupe, and St. Lucia, and with the help of the French Royalists occupied St. Domingo. This done, they began to die like flies of yellow fever. Such a thing was nothing new. It had happened in every West Indian expedition since the days of Cromwell, and might have been foreseen with absolute certainty. Very soon the West Indian garrisons were so weak as to be almost powerless. The negroes, stirred up by revolutionary agents from France, rose in insurrection, recovered Guadeloupe and St. Lucia and overpowered the whites in St. Vincent and Grenada. This also might have been foreseen, for the National Assembly in Paris, pushing the rights of man to their



logical conclusion, had early declared black men to be the equal of white ; and due warning had been sent to the British Government that a general revolt of the negroes might be expected.

✓ The whole of the work in the West Indies had therefore been practically undone by yellow fever, and required to be done again. It was done again by Sir Ralph Abercromby, with the men and officers who had been raised under Chatham's system ; and very badly these last behaved. Abercromby and one or two good officers, John Moore and John Hope the chief of them, were obliged to do everything, and by superhuman exertion contrived to accomplish it. St. Lucia was recovered ; Grenada and St. Vincent were reduced to order ; all three at the cost of converting what had once been rich islands into deserts. Then the men began to die once more. In St. Domingo, indeed, the mortality was such that in every summer the work of the previous winter was cancelled, and a new army required to do it afresh. In one instance a complete battalion, officers and men, was extinguished by sickness, every soul on the muster-roll having died ; and the negro insurrection in St. Domingo was as far as ever from being subdued. By the end of 1796 the losses of the army since the beginning of the war amounted to forty thousand dead—*dead*, mind you, not wounded or disabled—being more than Wellington's army lost from death, desertion, discharge, and all other causes during the whole of the Peninsular war. Forty thousand more had been discharged as unfit for service, chiefly from debility after yellow fever. Thus, after four years of fighting, Pitt and Dundas had thrown away eighty ✓ thousand men, the destruction of whom had not cost

one-tenth of that number to France. In fact neither France nor the Revolution were appreciably the worse.

But even this did not exhaust the blunders of the duumvirate, which were complicated by another cause, namely, the division of opinion in the Cabinet. Some digression will be necessary to make this clear. In July, 1794, the old Whigs, as Burke would have called them, decided finally to secede from Fox and the supporters of the French Revolution, and to join Pitt. The Duke of Portland became Second Secretary of State with control of the Home Department and the Colonies. Lord Spencer, after a short term as Lord Privy Seal, took over the Admiralty from Lord Chatham; Lord Fitzwilliam became Lord Lieutenant of Ireland; Lord Mansfield, Lord President; and William Windham, Secretary at War. Pitt, however, was firm that the conduct of all operations of war should remain in the hands of Dundas, and appointed him to a third Secretaryship of State for War, which was created specially for this purpose. The establishment of this new office was in itself an excellent piece of work. The direction of military operations was a task more than sufficient for any one man, and unity of command in that sphere was of the utmost importance. The only criticisms to be made upon the matter are that the wrong man was chosen to hold the Secretaryship for War, and that the reforms did not go far enough. Under the old system the militia, and all forces raised for home service only, were subject to the Home Office, and only the Regular Army was under the War Office. Thus the management of defence and of offence was in different hands, and this gave rise to many difficulties and much friction. I do not think, however, that Pitt can be blamed for

leaving things, in this respect, as they were. If he had attempted to place the Lords Lieutenant, the Militia, and Volunteers under the War Office, there would have been a howl of rage from one end of the country to the other at such an innovation. His action would have been called unconstitutional—a very useful word in controversy, for it has no definite meaning—and he would have been accused of concentrating the control of all military forces in a single hand, from sinister designs to undo the glorious Revolution of 1688. Moreover, he would at once have alienated the Whigs; for to give the Duke of Portland the Home Office shorn of half its patronage would have been, to the Duke and to his party, to give him a shell without the kernel.

Portland himself, setting aside the votes and the influence which he controlled in Parliament, was an impediment rather than a help to the business of the country. He could bring to her counsels a patriotism which was honest and sincere, according to his lights, but neither strength nor judgement, neither knowledge nor resolution. Lord Spencer worked hard at the Admiralty, and had the force of character to deprive Lord Hood of further employment; which was good policy, for Hood, though a great seaman, was with advancing age becoming impossibly cantankerous, a great deal too cunning and unduly eager for prize-money. It may be questioned, at the same time, whether Spencer was an improvement upon Chatham. Pitt's elder brother, though incurably indolent, was an extremely able administrator, with singularly clear judgement and great firmness of purpose. His responsibility for the failure before Dunkirk was, however, against



him ; and it was doubtless wise and politic, in consideration of the King's feelings as well as of those of the Whigs, to make him give way to Spencer. He was presently transferred to the Office of Ordnance, which he administered with such ability that in a few years he made the British Artillery the finest in Europe.

We come now to Lord Fitzwilliam and his brief career as Lord Lieutenant of Ireland, which has led to so much controversy. The success of the negotiations for the junction of the Whigs with Pitt turned very much upon the degree of control which Pitt was disposed to allow them upon Irish policy. Portland, in fact, averred that he was only induced to join the Government by the assurance that the Lord Lieutenant should be a man in whom he might have confidence ; and Portland's views on Irish policy were such as to require a subversion of the existing system. Lord Mansfield vouched for the truth of the Duke's assertion. He even added that he could give evidence, which would be received in a Court of Law, of an agreement that Portland was to have the entire and perfect management of Irish business, and that otherwise the negotiations would have been instantly stopped. So strongly did Portland feel about the matter that, within three months after joining Pitt, he threatened to resign unless a certain appointment in Ireland were cancelled. At the same moment Fitzwilliam himself announced his intention to resign at once, unless he were immediately nominated to the Lord Lieutenancy. There was imminent danger, in fact, of a rupture of the Coalition. Windham entreated Fitzwilliam to be patient. 'It is too much', he wrote, 'to expect Pitt to suffer proscription of all his measures, or to give up all

his old friends to the mercy of the new.'<sup>1</sup> The appeal had its effect, and the negotiations as to Irish policy were resumed. Portland's distrust of Pitt in the matter of Ireland was, however, astonishing. He was nervously apprehensive lest Pitt should filch the devotion of Grattan from him, and resorted to strange means to avert the danger. 'We must have another conference to-morrow,' he wrote to Windham on the 19th of October, 'Grattan cannot fall into any snare, for he dines with me, and cannot be entrapped between this and to-morrow; but I am sure if Pitt had got hold of him, he (Pitt) would have got complete dominion of Ireland for ever if he had so pleased.'<sup>2</sup>

✓ The inference to be drawn from this letter is that the Whigs wished their own Irish policy to prevail, less from pure statesmanship than from sheer lust of power. They knew that they would have little weight in the direction of general policy, and desired to compensate themselves by a free hand in Ireland. Pitt and his colleagues were evidently ready to indulge them to a certain extent, upon an understanding, partly tacit and partly expressed, that the Whigs should not take too great nor too conspicuous an advantage of the concessions thus granted to them. So Windham evidently understood the compact, as his letter to Fitzwilliam shows. This, however, was not Fitzwilliam's view. He, like the rest of his party, was ardent for the emancipation of the Catholics, and there can be no doubt but that they were quite right. Ireland was in a most dangerous condition; and the policy of removing

<sup>1</sup> Mansfield to Windham, Oct. 12, 1794; Windham to Fitzwilliam, Oct. 12, 1794; B.M. *Add. MS.* 37873.

<sup>2</sup> B.M. *Add. MS.* 37844.

Catholic disabilities, quite apart from its obvious merit as a measure of justice and conciliation, carried with it also most important military advantages. The preservation of order in Ireland locked up in that country a very large body of troops, which were thus disabled from the more important duty of carrying the war into the enemy's country beyond seas. Fitzwilliam, after emancipation of the Catholics had been accomplished, counted upon forming a constabulary which would not only have released the troops, but would have increased greatly the security both of Ireland and of the British Isles. Upon his arrival in Dublin, therefore, he countenanced the introduction of a Bill for Catholic relief without receiving any sign of disapprobation from England. But when, concurrently, he proceeded to upset the measures and dismiss the supporters and agents of all the Viceroys since the beginning of Pitt's administration, he was abruptly checked and recalled. The Irish Catholics felt themselves bitterly aggrieved. A great demonstration of mourning was made upon Fitzwilliam's departure ; and from that moment revolutionary principles, which had already gained a hold upon Ireland, spread rapidly. Whether a rebellion could, in the disordered state of the country, have been averted by Catholic emancipation may be doubted ; but after Fitzwilliam's recall it became inevitable. ✓

The whole trouble appears to have arisen really from the source that makes most of the trouble in this world—evasion of difficulties, or, in one word, cowardice. Both Pitt and the Whigs were honestly anxious to effect and to preserve a coalition between their two parties, from motives of true patriotism. They wished to show Europe that Great Britain presented a united



front, and to gain this most desirable object both were ready to make sacrifices. But the curious thing was that neither seemed really to understand that it was vital to include Ireland, if possible, in their united front. Portland can never really have pressed this consideration upon Pitt, nor did Pitt bring it to the attention of Portland. It is possible that Pitt was already meditating the scheme of a Union of Ireland with England, and was content to let the Whigs play harmlessly with Ireland for a time, until he was ready to take her in hand himself. This is the more likely, inasmuch as Pitt was avaricious of power, and liked himself to be the prime mover in all great affairs. But be that as it may, the compact between the two parties was evidently of the vaguest, for in truth both were thinking primarily of their coalition, and not of Ireland at all. Long conferences led to no clearly defined result, as was natural, with the inveterate prudence of Pitt on the one side and the inveterate irresolution of Portland on the other. Cabinet Ministers, after all, are but men who, not otherwise than their less exalted fellows, grow weary of protracted discussions and hungry for their meals. It is likely that questions upon which agreement is difficult are still shirked and left to settle themselves, as was the Irish question of Portland and Pitt, until some unforeseen occurrence brings them to a definite issue. Then the stronger will prevails, as did Pitt's over Portland's, though not, as a rule, until irremediable mischief has been done.

There was yet another point upon which the Whigs did not feel heartily with Pitt; which brings us back to the subject of the war. They did not agree with

his military policy. They deplored the despatch of troops to the West Indies when La Vendée was crying out for help. Herein, no doubt, they were inspired chiefly by Burke, whose profound political wisdom, at such a time, would have made him the Cabinet's best military adviser. 'In the affair of Dunkirk,' he wrote, 'victory was in a manner impossible. The whole plan of the war has, in my opinion, been totally wrong, and the bad military plan has arisen from the false political principles on which it was formed. . . . What sickens me is the variance of our acts from our declarations—not a man, not a ship, not an article of stores sent to those brave unfortunate people (in Vendée). All the force we can spare we destine for our indemnity.'<sup>1</sup> The Whigs did not merely repeat Burke's opinions: they apprehended his reasoning, and applied it intelligently. 'I think,' wrote Windham to Mr. Gilbert Elliott, 'if you see Dundas, it may not be amiss to urge the danger of running after distant objects while the great object lies still—of hunting the sheep till you have killed the dog. The most fatal error will be, I apprehend, the seeking to preserve the popularity of the war by feeding it with conquests.' Portland wrote in the same strain upon the news of the first British successes at Martinique. 'Would to God I could see the true French flag hoisted at Nantes or St. Malo. Sure I am that neither the capture of Martinique nor of all the French possessions in the West Indies will have any effect here, or do one-hundredth part of the service which the common cause would derive from the real French army in Vendée.'<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Burke to Windham (undated), B.M. *Add. MS.* 37843.

To quiet these complaints William Windham was appointed to be Secretary at War, upon the accomplishment of the coalition; and the whole business of the French Royalists of all kinds was placed in his hands. It was no sinecure, for England was swarming with these Royalists, many of them honest and fine fellows, but some of them rogues; and since Windham was known to be sympathetic, they did not spare him.

But before going further, a word must be said of Windham himself, who was one of the most interesting personalities of his time. Sprung from an old Norfolk family and heir to its beautiful seat, Felbrigg, William Windham was born in 1750, and educated at Eton and University College, Oxford. He was a scholar inferior to none of his fellow politicians, and was, further, rather attracted by certain researches in mathematics. But the most notable point in his intellectual training is that he very early came under the spell of Dr. Johnson, from whom he sought advice as to the improvement of his mind, and whom he really loved as well as revered, not only for the sage's wisdom, but for his broad humanity and his humour. In the many recent celebrations of Dr. Johnson it has frequently been debated why he remains such a favourite with us; and many learned brains have been cudgelled, quite unnecessarily, I think, to supply an answer in terms of fitting profundity. The problem is really quite simple. Johnson amuses us, and we like people who amuse us. He amused Windham too; and finding his young companion to be likewise clever, witty, humorous, well-conditioned, and full of interest in everything, the old man became greatly attached to him. When Johnson was dying Windham visited him as often as he dared, and



sent his servant to nurse him until the sick man, who even on his deathbed remained thoughtful for others, would not allow the master to be longer inconvenienced by his absence. The draft of a letter is still extant in which Windham adjures Fox to put on a black coat and follow Johnson's coffin from Bolt Court.

Friendship with Johnson and membership of the famous Club naturally brought Windham into contact with Burke, whom likewise he revered intensely. The two were in constant correspondence; and, though Burke was rude and violent occasionally even to his best friends when they presumed to differ from him in opinion, Windham never allowed these outbursts to cool his warm feeling towards him. In Burke's last days, also, a report was sent daily to Windham of his condition; and, so long as his strength lasted, the dying statesman would send him dictated letters, adding in his own tremulous hand a few words of affection. A man who could earn such attachment from such friends must have been more than ordinarily lovable; and this indeed was just what Windham was. Though in his *cf. Monday, Dec.* Journal he gives way to dreary self-introspection, he was one who went into society and enjoyed life; and he too, like Pitt, could play the fool at times. Moreover, he had a taste for new sensations, for in 1785 he ventured, not without trepidation and many farewells to his friends, to make an ascent in a balloon. One who knew all the men worth knowing of that day has recorded that Mr. Windham's conversation was the most charming of all, so lightly did his knowledge sit on him. Withal he was, as I have already mentioned, a good horseman; he could ride well to hounds, though more than once he confesses with shame to feeling

nervous in the saddle; and he was extremely happy on the race-course at Newmarket. Few men have so happily combined the excellences of a country squire, a scholar, and a gentleman. He entered Parliament in 1784, and for a short time was Chief Secretary to the Lord-Lieutenant of Ireland. He early made his mark as a speaker; and from their wit, their humour, and their extreme felicity of expression his speeches are less difficult to read than those of his contemporaries.

Such was the man who now undertook the cause of the French Royalists in England, holding it, as he said, as 'a kind of chapel of ease' to Dundas. He was the better fitted for the office since he had travelled considerably on the continent of Europe, having visited France twice even since the outbreak of the Revolution. His duties involved him in a vast deal of correspondence, which he answered with perfect facility and correctness in French; and he was indefatigable also in meeting the Vendean leaders secretly in their London houses. His only difficulty was that he could not get Pitt and Dundas to give any real attention to the Royalists, plead as he might. They were busy with West Indian conquests, and would think of nothing else. It was not until matters in Flanders were looking hopeless that Pitt at last consented to consider seriously an expedition in aid of the Vendéans. The total expulsion of the British from the Low Countries at the beginning of 1795 made France the only possible sphere for operations on the Continent, and in the summer of that year Windham received authority to dispatch an expedition to Quiberon. One of the Royalist leaders, Count Joseph de Puisaye, had

been for some months in England, and had urged that no land forces except corps of French emigrants should be employed, British co-operation being limited to a naval squadron, supplies, and stores. Windham was for seconding the Royalists with a powerful body of English troops. Lord Moira had indeed declared that no attempt should be made with fewer than 20,000 men; but to this Dundas was vehemently opposed, and of course he carried his point. Some thousands of Royalists were therefore collected; and to them in an evil moment the British Ministers added 1,600 French prisoners from among the many thousands already detained in England. The expedition began most prosperously. The force was successfully disembarked; the peninsula of Quiberon was seized; a prince of the blood was summoned to take supreme command; and all would have gone well had there been unity of direction to induce the insurgents ashore and the disembarked emigrants to work together. But this unity there was not. As fate willed it, the Revolutionary general on the spot, Lazare Hoche, was a man of brilliant ability, who failed not to take advantage of the dissensions of the Royalist leaders. He was helped by the desertion of the French prisoners, so insanely mixed with the Royalist forces, who joined his standard; and the whole enterprise came to wreck and disaster. Six thousand of the Royalists were captured; and, by order of the central Government in Paris, 600 of them were massacred in cold blood.

Then Ministers decided after all that they would send some British troops to aid the Vendéans; and prepared a force of 4,000 men to seize the island of Noirmoutier off the mouth of the Loire, as a dépôt for



the supply of arms to the insurgents. Lord Moira, an extremely able soldier, was chosen for the command, but speedily resigned it in disgust to General Doyle, who in turn declined to embark nearly one-fourth of his 4,000 men, as being absolutely useless. What earthly object could be accomplished with such a handful of soldiers neither Doyle nor Colonel Graham, the future Lord Lynedoch, could divine; but as in duty bound they sailed away to Noirmoutier, being now further encumbered with three regiments of Royalist cavalry and 2,000 horses. The attack on Noirmoutier was found to be impracticable; so, in pursuance of Dundas's instructions, Doyle landed on Isle d'Yeu, a barren island in the Atlantic, first taking the precaution to send all the cavalry-men and 1,500 horses back to England. There was no forage for the remaining horses, no shelter, and very little food for the men. The obvious thing to be done was either to re-embark the men on the transports and take them home, or to land food for them on the island. But the supplies on the transports had fallen low, and the danger of the one roadstead in the island was such that it was impossible, even from hour to hour, to reckon either upon embarking men or disembarking victuals. It was therefore impossible to take the soldiers on board ship, because there was not food enough to keep them alive, and equally impossible to put food enough for them ashore, because the ships might at any moment be driven to sea without hope of return until the men upon the island had been starved. It was only by great good fortune that the troops were ultimately brought safely back to England. Forty-five men died of exposure, and over one hundred horses

died of starvation upon the island within the space of one month, for no object whatever. And all this wicked folly was due to the divisions between Windham and Dundas in the Cabinet, which Pitt, apparently, was unable to compose. Had he declared firmly for Windham, the operations on the coast of France might have been conducted on a great scale, and some good might have come of them. Had he supported Dundas against Windham, he might at least have saved the waste and discredit of these petty, futile expeditions, and avoided the lasting disgrace of buoying up the insurgents in the north-west of France with false and misleading hopes.

To summarize the position once more, in 1796 Pitt had squandered in his military operations tens of thousands of men and millions of money to no purpose whatever; and had acquired, with the exception of the Cape of Good Hope, nothing but pestilential tropical islands, many of them hopelessly devastated, and all more deadly than war itself to the British soldier. France was not appreciably the weaker for all his efforts; whereas England was left literally, not only without an army, but, owing to the fatuous system of raising men for rank, with every possible disability for re-creating an army. In fact, in all military matters the duumvirate had made every mistake that they possibly could.

Nor had their diplomatic measures been more successful. England had begun the war by making treaties with Holland, Russia, Prussia, the Holy Roman Empire, Sardinia, Naples, Spain, and Portugal, granting to nearly all of them subsidies to keep their armies afoot and carry on hostilities with vigour. By

- ✓ 1796 the Coalition had not only been broken, but had been in part turned against England herself. Prussia, always selfish and dishonest, had made peace with France early in 1795; Holland, converted into the Dutch Republic, had formed an alliance with France in May of the same year, and had compelled England, for her own safety, to occupy the Dutch colonies of Ceylon and the Cape of Good Hope. Sardinia had agreed to a suspension of arms in November. Russia had occupied herself chiefly with Poland, to the distraction of Prussia and Austria; and it was only with the greatest difficulty that Russia and Austria were induced by subsidies to form a new Triple Alliance with England against France. So tortuous, however, were the ways of both Courts that little trust could be reposed on them; and as a matter of fact Catherine was more intent upon the partition of Turkey, while Austria was neglecting the defence of the Empire in order to seize Venetia. Finally, at the beginning of 1796, Hoche had succeeded practically in extinguishing the great insurrection in La Vendée.

Yet there was really nothing superhuman in the conduct of the French Government through the intervening years, unless it was their folly. Faction had succeeded faction, each extinguishing its predecessors by the help of the scum of Paris, organized ultimately into supremacy under the name of the Commune. The Commune itself had been put down; but the mob still remained ready for any stroke of state at the bidding of the rulers for the time being. The armies of France had been by no means uniformly victorious, the Austrians having in the autumn of 1795 beaten and demoralized that of the Rhine, though Massena



had gained the Genoese Riviera on the Italian side. But France was financially in utter exhaustion, and otherwise in a terrible state. All internal order was at an end. Banditti swarmed in all directions; and the very roads and bridges had become impassable for lack of repair. Lastly, the new Constitution, known by the name of the Directory, which had been promulgated in October, 1795, promised little improvement on the old. The extreme party was still in power, having established itself by force, and the waste and corruption were appalling. There could be no stability in such a Government; and yet this was the time chosen by Pitt for making overtures of peace. ✓

The old King was rightly very indignant. In October, 1795, he had written, not for the first time, to Grenville that no solid peace could be obtained unless the French were thoroughly reduced, and that no attempt to open a negotiation should be encouraged. A still more remarkable man, Lord Mornington, not yet Governor-General of India nor Marquess Wellesley, warned Grenville that a Government established by force could have no permanence. As might have been expected, Pitt's pacific proposals were rejected with contumely; upon which the King remarked that he had looked for nothing else. 'I should have hoped,' he added, 'that the courage of this nation had not been so sluggish as to require this insolence to bring it to its proper tone.' Further hostilities were therefore inevitable; and a great effort by Austria and Russia should have sufficed to break down all further resistance of the French. But once again Poland saved France. Catherine declared that she

must keep troops to watch Prussia, and could not therefore send them to the Rhine. Austria caught the infection of suspicion, and held 80,000 men idle to watch the Prussians also. The opening of the campaign on the Rhine was delayed for a month; and the Austrian army in Italy was kept weak just when it ought to have been strongest.<sup>1</sup>

✓ For in the spring of 1796 a new General, one Napoleon Bonaparte, took command of the French in Italy, and changed the whole aspect of affairs. With the plunder of that country he replenished the empty Treasury in Paris, and by his successes in the field he broke up what was left of the Coalition. Sardinia came to terms, yielding up Nice and Savoy in May. Lombardy was annexed to France. Parma and Modena made their peace; and Genoa and Tuscany did the same. Naples made abject overtures for an accommodation; and the hold of the British upon Corsica became precarious. Spain not only made a treaty with France, but declared war against England. Misfortune succeeded misfortune; and on the 31st of August the British Government ordered Corsica to be evacuated, and the fleet to be withdrawn from the Mediterranean.

And if things went ill abroad, they were little better at home. A succession of bad harvests had caused great misery and dangerous riots. Trade had suffered from the depredations of French cruisers; and there was acute financial distress. Seditious societies and individuals had been active in propagating the doctrines of the French Revolution, and the prosecution of the offenders had not always been successful. It

<sup>1</sup> *Hist. MSS. Commission, Dropmore Papers*, iii. 143, 149, 186.

had been found necessary to suspend the Habeas Corpus Act in 1794 and 1795, of course in the teeth of bitter comments from the Opposition. In October, 1795, the King had been shot at on his way to open Parliament, and had shown his fearless contempt for the mob by going to the opera on the same night. Fox and his followers were always declaiming against the war in season and out of season; with criticisms, which were only too just, upon the management of the operations. The state of Ireland was rapidly growing worse; and lastly, the French were definitely threatening England with invasion. }

In such circumstances Pitt in September decided to make a second attempt at peace. In that month came better news of a brilliant victory of the Archduke Charles over the French in Germany; but to the huge indignation of the Austrian Court Pitt would not abandon his pacific intention; and in October Lord Malmesbury started for Paris. The King agreed very unwillingly to this overture, and did not conceal his opinion of it. 'As Lord Grenville and Mr. Pitt think a further step of humiliation necessary to call forth the spirit which used to be characteristic of this island, I will not object.'<sup>1</sup> Such were the terms in which he couched his assent. Burke, on his side, could not restrain his amazement at the idea of 'putting the whole affairs of Europe blindfold into Lord Malmesbury's hands'.<sup>1</sup> He need not have troubled himself, for in December Malmesbury was suddenly and with marked discourtesy ordered to withdraw from Paris. A French expedition of 18,000 men

<sup>1</sup> *Dropmore Papers*, iii. 256.

<sup>2</sup> Burke to Windham (undated), 1796, B.M. *Add. MS.* 37844.



for the invasion of Ireland had actually started three days before for Bantry Bay.

This enterprise was wrecked by bad weather and bad seamanship—a fortunate chance for England. No British fleet was on the spot to intercept the French armament at sea; and it would have taken a fortnight to assemble 9,000 men to meet the French troops ashore. The Lord-Lieutenant, much alarmed, begged a reinforcement of regular soldiers, but there were actually none to be spared from England. It will hardly be believed that, upon the outbreak of war with Spain, Dundas had directed an attack to be made upon the Spanish West Indies, and was only saved, by a petty raid of the French upon the coast of Wales, from ordering 1,800 men from the Cape to make a raid upon Rio de la Plata. Think upon the extreme folly of this at such a time, and indeed at any time. The Spanish colonies were on the verge of revolt, but what countenance could 1,800 men give them against the forces of Spain on the spot? What security could they offer against an armament dispatched from Spain to take vengeance upon the colonists? Yet this was the way of Pitt and Dundas—of Dundas from an eternal craving to advertise some perfectly unprofitable little success; of Pitt from the inveterate prudence which forbade him ever to risk a considerable force for a definite and considerable military object.

Upon the news of the Archduke's victory in Germany, Ministers had sent orders to the fleet not to abandon the Mediterranean, but these arrived too late. Its withdrawal relieved Bonaparte of a great anxiety, and enabled him to give his undivided attention to the Austrians. The Court of Vienna, already furious

with Pitt for opening negotiations with France, was not conciliated by the evacuation of the Mediterranean and by an unexpected delay in the payment of the British subsidy. That delay was due to financial difficulties which culminated in February, 1797, in the suspension of cash payments by the Bank of England. Another complication arose out of the death of the Empress Catherine in November, 1796, and the refusal of her successor to take any part in the war. Bonaparte, thanks chiefly to the incapacity of the Austrian generals, advanced from success to success in Italy, pursued the Austrians into the heart of Carinthia, and on the 18th of April concluded at Léoben a preliminary treaty with Austria, which left England practically alone in the struggle against France.

Just three days before this had begun the mutiny at Spithead, when the seamen declined to do further duty unless their grievances were redressed by Act of Parliament. These grievances were legitimate, and should have been remedied long before, for the men demanded only fair wages, sufficient food, better care of their sick, protection from embezzlement of their due, and a short leave of absence on returning home from sea. Under threat of mutiny these claims were at once conceded; and at the same time the Army received the increase of pay for which the military authorities had been praying ever since 1784. A new mutiny followed at the Nore, which was of political complexion, but caused the greater alarm since the Army was thought to be tainted as well as the Navy. The whole country, however, supported Pitt in the suppression of this outbreak, which was finally quelled towards the end of June.

A great deal has been made of the courage and firmness with which Pitt and his colleagues faced this formidable crisis. Let them have due honour for it, for the situation was really appalling. So awful was the prospect that Ministers were fain to jest, as men will at such times, to relieve their feelings, and Canning wrote some stanzas to Windham adjuring him to rejoice over 'a day of no disaster'.<sup>1</sup> But little is said of the blunders and neglect which allowed such a situation to come about at all, though it would be difficult to find words which would be too severe in reprehension of them.

Depressed by these occurrences, and still more by the Treaty of Léoben, Pitt decided to renew his overtures for peace with France. The King, as usual, was strongly opposed to such action. 'The many humiliating steps I have been advised to take in the last nine months,' he wrote, 'have left so deep an impression on my mind, that I undoubtedly feel this kingdom lowered in its proper estimation much below what I should have flattered myself could have been the case during the latter part of my reign.'<sup>2</sup> Nor did he stand alone in his doubts. Grenville also felt so strongly adverse to these overtures, that but for the extreme gravity of the time he would have resigned. Windham was not present at the Cabinet, but he evidently shared the opinions of Grenville and absented himself on that account. Lord Liverpool, who was not yet a prominent member of the Ministry, likewise did not attend, no doubt to avoid expressing his dissent. However, the decision was carried by eight to three, and Lord

<sup>1</sup> Canning to Windham (in verse), May 12, 1797, B.M. *Add. MS.* 37<sup>844</sup>.

<sup>2</sup> *Dropmore Papers*, iii. 327.



Malmesbury was sent in July to meet the French plenipotentiaries at Lille. Pitt nourished great hopes of success, for he had been led to expect good terms in return for a bribe of £450,000, and had arranged to furnish that sum without disclosing the matter to Parliament. Undoubtedly there were among the Directors men quite debased and venal enough to sell their country's interests; but Grenville could not reconcile himself to England's purchasing her safety. 'It would be ten times safer and cheaper too,' he wrote, 'to face the storm than to shrink from it.'<sup>1</sup> Pitt, however, persisted, and was once again humiliated by failure. The Directors, finding their supremacy threatened by the Moderate party, were obliged to overawe them by violence, which was done by the Revolution known as that of the 18th of Fructidor (Sept. 3). The first and immediate result of this revolution was the rupture of the negotiations. There seems, however, to have been some attempt to renew them, always at the price of £450,000, and Pitt and Dundas were both very willing to embrace the opportunity. Grenville, as before, hoped that it would not succeed, and Windham wrote Pitt a letter which must have made his ears tingle. 'I gather that you are of opinion that among the endless changes in France, some Government may listen to our cries for peace and grant us terms not utterly destructive of the trade and commerce of our country. If our terms fall lower and lower, it may be so; but my own idea is that we shall go on and on until at last we shall be utterly aground and lie at the enemy's mercy. It seems to me that what are called prudent counsels are the most replete with danger. When we threw the

<sup>1</sup> *Dropmore Papers*, iii. 378.

desperate cast of risking the last army of the country in a conflict with yellow fever, we did it under the notion of playing a safe game, and not committing ourselves in such dangerous enterprises as those of attempting to co-operate with the Royalists of France. . . . Let us take care that by the same prudent line of conduct we do not find ourselves in a similar or worse situation a year or two hence.'<sup>1</sup>

The negotiations came to nothing, and the bad year 1797 ended worse than it had begun. The only bright spot in it was the brilliant naval victory of Jervis off Cape St. Vincent on the 14th of February. But things had nearly reached their worst, and were now about to mend.

<sup>1</sup> Windham to Pitt, Oct. 10, 1797, B.M. *Add. MS.* 37844.

## LECTURE IV

IMMEDIATELY after the signature of the preliminaries of Léoben, Bonaparte had, as you will recollect, returned to Italy to effect the subjugation of Venice and Genoa. This enabled him to come to the definite Treaty of Campo Formio with Austria in October, 1797. Hereby Austria ceded to France her Belgic provinces, also the Milanese, Modena, Bologna, and the Venetian territory west of the Adige, these last called nominally the Cisalpine Republic, but being in fact wholly dependent upon their French conquerors. France took also the Ionian Islands, and left to Austria Venice itself, with the rest of her possessions on both shores of the Adriatic. Having already acquired Nice and Savoy from Sardinia, and having the Dutch Republic completely under her influence, France was thus mistress of the Netherlands and practically of most of Northern Italy, together with all the resources of these countries. ✓

All this signified a great accession of real strength, which England could match only by the acquisition of poisonous islands. Happily, however, Dundas's expedition against the Spanish West Indies added to these no more than Trinidad. In August, 1797, Sir Ralph Abercromby, who had commanded it, returned to Windward to superintend the raising of a number of negro regiments. This may sound to you a small matter, but it marked a very important departure in



military policy; for it signified that the West Indian Islands were in future to be garrisoned by black soldiers who could live in them, instead of by white troops who were difficult to procure and could only die. The task was less easy than you would suppose; for the West Indian planters objected strongly to raising the status of the negro above slavery, believing, perhaps with more reason than people are inclined to admit, that only thus was the supremacy of the white man in the tropics assured. As a matter of fact, the formation of negro regiments did decidedly help forward the work of emancipation, though by no means designed with that object; but to us at present the more material consideration is that it saved the lives of from three to four thousand British troops annually.

Almost more important still is the fact that Dundas sent out in 1797 two strong and able men to look to affairs in St. Domingo. Dundas, so miserly towards French Royalists at home, had been lavish to their brethren in this island. He had fallen into the hands of some clever impostors, who had made enormous sums out of the British Treasury, and given remarkably little in return. The whole place was a sink of rascality and speculation, which needed to be purged with a firm hand. Parliament, moreover, had grown weary of the expenditure on this unprofitable possession, and had insisted that the annual cost should not exceed £300,000 a year. But this sum was quite insufficient to maintain the British mastery over the islands; and the black insurgents under Toussaint l'Ouverture were daily gaining ground. Still Dundas would not give up St. Domingo, and he was even

weak enough to yield once more to the representatives of the Royalist intriguers, and to make an effort to prolong the existing order of things. Luckily his instructions were set aside as sheer folly by the commander on the spot, who without more ado withdrew all British troops from the island, and made over the government to Toussaint l'Ouverture. It was a heavy responsibility for a mere lieutenant-colonel to assume, and Thomas Maitland deserves endless credit for his courage in undertaking it. With the abandonment of St. Domingo there fell from England's neck a millstone which had been strangling her since 1793. That accursed island had cost her fully ten thousand British soldiers and sailors dead, and at least as many incapacitated for further service.

This was very greatly to the good abroad ; but in 1798 the danger was deadliest at home. Ireland had gone steadily from bad to worse. Disorder and lawlessness were more than ever rife ; and the troops were thoroughly demoralized by being broken up into small detachments and scattered all over the country. Thus released from the control of their officers, alternately petted by the country gentlemen and cursed by the people, the soldiers took leave of all discipline, and were guilty of every description of violence and oppression. On his return from the West Indies Sir Ralph Abercromby was appointed to the command-in-chief in Ireland, and was shocked beyond expression at the state of the Army. 'It was', as he stated in a famous general order, 'in a state of licentiousness which must render it formidable to every one but the enemy.' The Ministry were so furious at this plain speaking that they took Abercromby severely to task. The veteran

therefore resigned, nor could all the blandishments of the Lord-Lieutenant prevail with him to recall his resignation. He fell into deep disgrace with supporters of the Government, but fortunately he had a friend who knew his worth. The old King took him aside at the levée, told him that he had been extremely ill-treated, and that he would appoint him Commander-in-Chief in Scotland, where people would know how to respect him. George the Third was not going to allow an excellent officer, who had done untold good service to his country, to be made a scapegoat for the negligence of his Ministers.

✓ This trouble with Abercromby was the direct consequence of allowing matters in Ireland to drift; and this in turn was due in very great measure to the mismanagement of the war. It may justly be pleaded that the burden of work and anxiety laid upon Ministers was gigantic; but on the other hand it had been very greatly increased by their own blunders. It is true that the complications in Poland contributed beyond all other causes to allow the Revolution Militant to make its way in Europe. ✓ These complications had prevented the British Government from retrieving their first blunder at Dunkirk, and had wrecked their campaigns in the Low Countries. These once more had paralysed the struggle of the Triple Alliance of 1796, and allowed Bonaparte to conquer Italy. They were the misfortune of Ministers and not their fault. But England by herself would not have been powerless if her efforts had been directed to the right object. One cannot too often dwell upon this point. Reflect once again that by the end of 1797 England had expended, if I may use the word, one hundred thousand men, quite



two-thirds of them in filling graves and hospitals in the West Indies, for no purpose whatever. A compact army of thirty or forty thousand British troops in France or in Italy might have turned the scale at any time between 1795 and 1797, all distractions in Poland notwithstanding; and their presence in Europe would have heartened the allies to greater and more unselfish efforts. It is customary to say that Pitt could not have found a general to command such an army; but that is nonsense. There were plenty of men of sufficient capability, as we found out as soon as we began to trust our officers with forces of decent strength. But the mere fact of being sent away continually with handfuls of men for foolish or impossible objects reacted upon the self-confidence of the British generals. They did not trust their masters, and did not like to serve under their orders in any part of the world.

Most notably was this seen after Abercromby's resignation in Ireland. Not an officer of any standing would accept the command-in-chief; and Ministers were obliged to leave this important charge in the hands of the general, Lake, next senior to Abercromby, who, although a splendid fighting soldier, had from sheer complaisance countenanced the abuses which Abercromby desired to put down. This was a most serious matter, for those abuses rendered the army in Ireland powerless against an external enemy; and there was every reason to fear a formidable descent upon Ireland by the French. In December 1797, the redoubtable Bonaparte had arrived in Paris, clothed in all the glory of his Italian victories, and had been received with wild enthusiasm by the people. The Directors were not so well pleased to see him, dreading his masterful

temperament; and he, perceiving this, began at once to prepare a great expedition for his own aggrandisement abroad. Ships and funds were obtained by shameless plundering of Holland, the Papal States, and Switzerland; and the object of the great armament was ostentatiously proclaimed to be England. It seems, indeed, that Bonaparte would gladly have invaded England in earnest, had he thought it feasible; but he soon satisfied himself that, in the existing condition of the French Navy, such an attempt was hopeless. He therefore turned his thoughts towards a wild scheme of conquest in the East—the enterprise of his dreams from beginning to end of his life—and laid an ambitious plan for that object before the Directors. Overjoyed to be rid of him, they gladly gave him the commission that he sought; and on the 19th of May, a full month later than he had designed, Bonaparte sailed from Toulon.

The close secrecy maintained as to the true destination of this expedition caused the greatest uneasiness in Europe, although practically France was at war with no country except England. Since Bonaparte's armament had from first to last been called the Army of England, the British Ministers naturally looked for an invasion, though it did not escape them that Brest and not Toulon was the obvious point of departure for an attack upon the British Isles. Captain Sidney Smith, who was much employed as a secret agent, reported in January 1798, that the French were intent upon Egypt and the trade of the Levant.<sup>1</sup> The Court of Vienna, which was already working to create a new Coalition, was more apprehensive of an attack upon Naples, particularly after the recent proceedings of the French

<sup>1</sup> *Dropmore Papers*, iv. 2-4.

in the Papal States. Both parties strongly urged the dispatch of a fleet to the Mediterranean. It does not appear that the British Ministers had thought of such a thing, until Austria suggested it to them. Even then they were at first lukewarm about accepting the idea, though here Lord Grenville was an exception. Much to his honour, he seems to have grasped at it eagerly; but Lord Spencer gave no encouraging report from the Admiralty. Dundas was firmly persuaded that, if only the whole of the military arrangements, including the command of the Militia, were entrusted to him, he should welcome an invasion rather than the contrary, and would prefer to meet the issue upon English soil. His confidence was based upon the vicious policy of allowing Volunteers to be enrolled, without any organization whatever, in all parts of the realm. Pitt wavered between Grenville and Dundas, inclining, as was to be expected, to the side of Dundas.<sup>1</sup> The Austrian Ambassador, however, continued to press for a fleet; and by the middle of April Grenville was able to assure him that, if the other details of a general agreement could be settled, there would be no difficulty upon this point. Lord Spencer to the last was doubtful,<sup>2</sup> and he had some excuse for his attitude. If the fleet were dispatched to the Mediterranean it must be taken from the north coast of Ireland, where the naval force had been specially strengthened in order to meet invasion. By whose influence the final decision was carried is unknown, but carried it was. The Irish coast was left unprotected; and a reinforcement of twelve ships was sent to Lord St. Vincent off Cadiz, with

<sup>1</sup> *Dropmore Papers*, iv. 79, 166-7.

<sup>2</sup> *Dropmore Papers*, iv. 178.



orders to detach a squadron of that strength under Nelson to Toulon.

This was a turning-point of the whole war—the conversion of an inert and shameful defensive into a vigorous and telling offensive. Pitt had at last been goaded by Austria into throwing off his inveterate prudence and actually hazarding some risk for a stroke which would really damage the Revolution Militant. Let it be noticed, however, that this was the doing of Austria. Ministers, with the possible exception of Grenville, did not perceive for themselves that, if Bonaparte's expedition were designed for operations in the East, such a detachment of force was a great military blunder on his part, of which advantage should instantly be taken. They did not at once grasp that if the armament were intended against England it had better be met and defeated before it reached the Straits of Gibraltar. No! Their military policy was still one of pinpricks, and Dundas at this very time sent an absurd little expedition of fourteen hundred men to the coast of Holland, which was utterly defeated and captured to a man. Nevertheless, let Ministers have all praise for their courage in sending their ships from home waters to the Mediterranean. Whatever their motives, whatever their hesitation, they did it. Let it always be remembered to their honour.

Meanwhile the rebellion in Ireland broke out, and the Irish garrisons amply justified Abercromby's strictures upon their indiscipline. The insurrection proper had hardly been suppressed, when in August a thousand French regular troops under General Humbert landed on the coast of Mayo. This little band met a force of 1,700 men, including British regular troops, and

dispersed it in shameful and humiliating defeat; nor were the French finally caught and captured by overwhelming numbers until a fortnight later. Humbert declared that if he could have been reinforced by 2,000 men he would have gained Ireland; and he spoke truth. The military measures of the Government for home-defence were fully as rotten as their military arrangements at large.

However, the last military step of Ministers had been a wise and courageous one, and they gained their reward instantly. Bonaparte, as you all know, had sailed first to Malta, which he captured; and then to Alexandria, where Nelson actually arrived before him. Had the great Admiral been a little less impatient, he might have sunk the whole of the French fleet and transports, changing perhaps the history of Europe. As things were, he sailed away to search for his enemy elsewhere, and did not return until after Bonaparte had landed his army. Then on the 1st of August Nelson surprised the French fleet at anchor in Aboukir Bay, and not only annihilated it, but completely isolated Bonaparte and his army in Egypt, leaving them open to be overwhelmed whenever a superior force could be landed against them. The blow coincided with a general turn of fortune against France. The capture of Malta had inflamed the Tsar Paul against her, and he was ready to employ 60,000 men to oppose France, if any one would pay them. Switzerland had risen in revolt, though to no purpose. Naples, driven to extremity by French aggression, had concluded a defensive alliance with Austria. The whole of Italy, maddened by the rapacity and oppression of its French rulers, was ripe for revolt. France herself

was utterly ruined and exhausted by the corrupt government of the Directory. The entire country was in hopeless disorder ; and the army, unfed, unpaid, and demoralized by plunder and marauding, was in a dangerous state of indiscipline.

Now was the time to land a British army in Italy, sweep the French out, and threaten France from the south, while Austria and Russia girded themselves to invade her from the east. Only a base of operations was needed, and that Ministers prepared at once to seize. But a word must first be said as to the soldiers and the Commander who were employed for the purpose.

Upon the declaration of war by Spain against England, the Court of Madrid, under the influence of the French, had threatened Portugal with invasion unless she closed her ports to the British. Portugal, absolutely helpless under a miserable Government, appealed to England for troops. As usual, there were no troops. With much difficulty 2,000 British soldiers were scraped together, and to them the British Government added seven battalions of French refugees and emigrants, amounting in all to 4,000 men. These last were not dispatched on this service without a furious contest between the two sections of the Cabinet. In 1796, no doubt in consequence of the disaster at Quiberon in the previous year, the command of foreign Royalist corps had been taken from Windham and given to the Commander-in-Chief, who, judging them not unjustly to be useless, had decided to disband them. Windham, with Burke at his back, clamoured that this would be a breach of faith ; to which it was shortly retorted that the battalions must go to Portugal



or be disbanded. To Portugal therefore they went, and General Charles Stuart, a son of Lord Bute, was chosen to command the whole force in that country. This selection nearly drove Burke crazy. 'I look upon Portugal as lost by this appointment,' he wrote to Wyndham. 'I never heard of the abilities of General Stuart. He will quarrel with the emigrant corps. . . . There is something strongly redolent of madness in the family. . . . No experience of the fatal consequences of jobs will prevent jobbers from jobbing to the last.'<sup>1</sup>

Now it so happened that Charles Stuart was a man of very remarkable ability. Indeed I am disposed to consider him as the very ablest man who at that time wore the red coat, John Moore and Arthur Wellesley not excepted. He had so far held no supreme command except in Corsica; but there he had done brilliant work. He was, however, extremely independent and afraid of no one, least of all of Henry Dundas, whom he treated with undisguised contempt; and it was to the credit of Ministers that they gave him this employment. However, since Burke had set the example of railing against him, the Whigs in the Cabinet made his task as difficult as possible. The French emigrant corps proved to be as worthless as the Commander-in-Chief had stated. The officers were idle, lazy, and insubordinate, very willing to receive pay, very unwilling to do work in return, and in perpetual correspondence with their friends in France in order to make their peace with the Directory. Stuart, who was not a man to endure such things,

<sup>1</sup> Burke to Windham, November 25, 1796, B.M., *Add. MS.* 37843.

Y suspended or in some way punished the offenders at once; whereupon the Duke of Portland promptly re-instated them, or otherwise remitted the penalty. Truly, as Burke said, nothing would prevent jobbers jobbing to the last; and I think that nothing is more discreditable to the Whigs than this particular transaction. Burke, however, died in 1797; and the Duke of Portland was too feeble to stand up against a masterful man such as Stuart. With great firmness and extraordinary tact the General reduced the emigrants to order and discipline, in defiance of Portland's mischievous interference, and virtually converted the 4,000 insubordinate men into good soldiers. In July 1798, the Ministry consulted Lord St. Vincent as to the expediency of entrusting to Stuart an attack upon Minorca. The old Admiral gave a very forcible, though ungrammatical answer in the affirmative. 'No one can manage Frenchmen as well as him; and the British will go to hell for him.' St. Vincent was quite right. Stuart's armament was most inadequately equipped for any such enterprise; but none the less he boldly landed and cowed the Spaniards into surrender, without firing a shot, by sheer skill and the most audacious impudence.

Here, therefore, was a strong naval base gained in the Mediterranean; and all that was further needed was an army. But England had no army. Nelson, in his extreme anxiety to follow up his great victory, returned to Naples from Egypt and launched 15,000 Neapolitan soldiers against the French. The only result was that the 15,000 took to their heels at the first shot, that the French occupied Naples, and that the Court of Naples fled for refuge to Palermo. But

the loyalty of Sicily to King Ferdinand was extremely doubtful. French agents were already at work there, and, if the French should cross the straits of Messina, there was no hope of resisting them. In despair Nelson appealed to Stuart for help; and Stuart at once came in person with two British regiments. Within five hours he had obtained from the bewildered Court full powers to organize the defence of the island. Within forty-eight he had made the entire population his enthusiastic followers; and within six weeks he had matured a masterly plan for securing Sicily against any attack. He had seen at a glance that, with the resources and harbours of Sicily at their command, British fleets and armies could act against the French on either coast of Italy. Troops suddenly descending from the sea could devour all detached French garrisons piecemeal and, if the Austrians invaded Italy from the Tyrol, could act with decisive effect on the French flanks and rear. In fact, Stuart had framed for the British Ministers the military policy which they had been unable to frame for themselves; and all that they had to do was to take advantage of it.

Unfortunately, having no army, they were obliged to make one, and in the meanwhile to pay their allies to furnish armies for them. Russia, Turkey, and Naples were easily gained, and, since a preliminary arrangement had already been made with Austria, a special envoy, Thomas Grenville, was sent to Berlin to try and persuade Prussia to join the Coalition. Frederick William the Second had died in November 1797, and it was hoped that, under a new king, Prussia might be guided into playing a less selfish part in the affairs of Europe. Frederick William the



Third, however, proved to be if possible even worse than his predecessor. He had to his great misfortune been ill and unsympathetically brought up, and was alike stupid, greedy, irresolute, and deceitful. He persisted in his neutrality; and Austria, always insanely jealous of Prussia, would not join the Coalition until January 1799. Even then she delayed part of her troops for a time in order to watch those of her neighbour instead of those of her enemy. Relieved by this respite of six months after the battle of the Nile, the French amended their weakness by passing a law of conscription to recruit their armies. Its effects would have been wholly discounted if Austria could have been persuaded to declare war in the autumn; or if England had possessed, as she ought to have possessed, a force of 40,000 men.

How to raise such a force was the problem that now confronted Ministers. They had tried to solve it in January 1798 by passing an Act to allow 10,000 militiamen to enlist in the Army; but the attempt had failed. The Lords Lieutenant, who were then each in charge of the Militia of his county, had no idea of allowing their men to be buried in the West Indies by Pitt and Dundas. Nor were the men themselves ambitious of any such privilege. Nothing further was therefore done during that year; though Dundas brought forward several plans of a kind that Windham pronounced to be not easy to distinguish or to understand. Nevertheless Pitt in July 1799 boldly projected a scheme of operations, and promised Russia that he would send 30,000 men to Holland if she would send half as many to join them there. This field of operations was selected for two reasons: first, because it was

hoped that the Dutch would rise and help to drive the French out, a thing which experience had conclusively proved that they would never do ; secondly, because it was expected that Prussia might join the Coalition for the recovery of Holland, whereas Prussia had consistently shown that she would never move a man except for an entirely selfish object. The Tsar, however, eagerly accepted the offer ; but meanwhile six weeks were lost in Cabinet deliberations ; and it was not till the beginning of July, that is to say when the season for a campaign in Holland was more than half over, that Pitt began his measures to create an army.

He had promised 30,000 men : he had only 10,000 at his disposal. Therefore it was necessary for him to raise 20,000. They were levied without any difficulty by offering militiamen ten guineas bounty to enlist for service in Europe only ; but these men did not form an army. In the first place, they were all drunk until they had spent their ten guineas ; and in the second, being drafted out to a number of different regiments, they knew nothing of their comrades, and nothing of their officers. I presume that you are aware that the difference between a regiment and a body of trained men is, that in the one case all ranks know each other, trust each other, will work for each other, and have confidence in themselves and in each other, while in the other case there is no such coherence or stability. If you want one or two hundred schoolboys to work together you would, if you knew your business, take them all from the same school, and not from fifty different schools. Indeed, if you were to raise five hundred boys from fifty different schools, and match them against five hundred Etonians, the Etonians

would sweep the others off the field, not because they are better or finer boys, but because they know each other and have Eton as a common bond of union and *esprit de corps*. Or, as another case, take a great college at Oxford, say Christ Church ; let its numbers sink to seventy or eighty, and make it up in a week to five hundred by drafts of undergraduates from all the other colleges in Oxford or Cambridge. There will be five hundred undergraduates, but they will not be Christ Church men. In three months they would be tending in that direction, and in six months they would be tolerably united. Now the battalions that Pitt filled out with militiamen were exactly an analogous case. They counted seven or eight hundred soldiers, but were not regiments. They wanted six months to shake them together.

To send these men into the field in this raw state was one great blunder. A second blunder was that the Duke of York was sent out in command of them ; but this was in the circumstances pardonable, for the Russians would otherwise have claimed to command the entire force. A third blunder was the choice of the field of operations. Sir Ralph Abercromby, himself to go upon the expedition, was consulted upon this point, and gave it as his opinion that the object was not worth the risk. Now Abercromby was a model of what a soldier should be, an educated and well-read gentleman, a respectable Latin scholar, a practical farmer, amiable, gentle, modest, brave, resolute, enterprising, master of his profession, of great experience in war, and in the very highest sense patriotic. One would have thought that his views upon a purely professional matter would have com-



manded respect. It was not so. Pitt was madly sanguine that the Dutch would rise and that the Prussians would give help. Grenville was as sanguine as Pitt. Both thought that Abercromby needed only to land in Holland, and that the country would be his. Dundas was more sensible, and by no means so confident. Windham was firmly for utilizing the strength of England to countenance the Royalists in La Vendée, and particularly the renowned leader Georges, who had once more become active. Pitt replied that this could come after the business in Holland was finished, which Windham demonstrated to be absurd. 'It is curious to observe', he wrote a year later to Lord Spencer, 'that those who will risk nothing upon some occasions are upon others disposed to conclude that every chance, those even the most improbable, must all turn out in their favour. Those who would believe in no Royalist insurrection would not suffer a doubt to be entertained of an insurrection in favour of the Stadtholder. Those who were full of distrust of Frenchmen had the most perfect reliance on the zeal and energy of Dutchmen.'

This criticism is singularly true. When Pitt threw off his inveterate prudence, he could believe anything that he wished, and was much annoyed when any one hesitated to share in his faith. He so far forgot himself as to be positively rude to Abercromby, when the general upheld his own sound military judgement against Pitt's vague assumptions. The veteran, though he had never quite forgiven Pitt's treatment of him in Ireland, kept his temper and quietly repeated his opinion; but none the less he was ordered to take an advanced corps of ten thousand men, and to attempt

some exceedingly hazardous operations in concert with the Prussians. It was ascertained before he sailed that the Prussians would take no part in the proceedings, but all the same Abercromby was hurried to sea with none of the necessary equipment for which he had asked, but with instructions which bade him practically go to Holland and do something.

And here I must pause for a moment to remark that these instructions to generals, to go somewhere and do something, recurred frequently so long as Pitt's influence survived in British counsels. They recall perhaps, in some slight measure, his father's vague and grandiose conceptions, but bear as little true resemblance to them as a wax match does to a rocket. Chatham gave his servants at least a blaze of light, soaring high and dying with magnificence, an illumination which, though of brief endurance, might live in men's eyes and help them to further light. Pitt struck his match with a flourish, and thrust it into their hands, a feeble, flickering flame, which burned their fingers and expired. He imagined, I doubt not, that he was sending them to do something for their country; but such instructions, however well intended, do not tend towards true patriotic service. When a general is ordered to go somewhere and do something, it means something to save the credit of Government with the country, with her allies, with Europe at large. It is fair to add that the impeachment of a Minister was no child's play in Pitt's time, and that he and the general ran great risks in case of a failure. But in these days, when impeachment is obsolete, though courts-martial, happily, still exist, a Minister who gives such instructions should be driven with ignominy into private life.

However, Abercromby sailed, and having by extraordinary good luck effected his landing, established himself in North Holland. The people who were to rise to join him proved to be unfriendly, if not hostile ; and nothing more could be done until the Duke of York and the Russians arrived with reinforcements. The true campaign, therefore, was not opened until September, whereas it should have been opened in May, and that in a country so difficult that the best judges deemed success to be impossible. After three severe actions, costing in all from nine to ten thousand men, the Duke had gained barely twenty miles of ground ; and at the beginning of October he was glad to retreat and to secure his re-embarkation by a convention, not wholly creditable to England, with the French. It cannot be said that he increased his reputation in the field by his conduct of operations ; but it is also true that the Government gave him no fair chance of success, and that the circumstances of his failure justified the preliminary warnings of Abercromby in every detail. The chief result of the campaign was that the Russian and British armies parted from each other on bad terms, which for years embittered the relations between the Courts of St. James's and St. Petersburg.

International jealousy had likewise wrecked the operations of the Austrians and Russians in Italy. After a brilliant campaign, in which he was ably seconded by the Archduke Charles, Suvorof had reduced French domination in Italy to the possession of little more than the Genoese Riviera. But interference from Vienna not only checked him in mid career by withdrawing the Austrian armies that should



have supported him, but brought upon him actual failure and defeat in Switzerland. By the autumn of 1799 the Coalition had been practically dissolved by its internal quarrels, while its work was still but half done. In the same autumn, on the 9th of October, the man, who was destined to undo all that had been accomplished, landed in France. After the battle of the Nile Napoleon had invaded Syria, but had been checked at Acre by the enterprise of the British squadron under Sir Sidney Smith at sea, and by the skill of a French Royalist officer ashore. He was fain to return to Egypt; and in August 1799 he stealthily quitted his army, arriving through the negligence of Sidney Smith with safety in France. Had Ministers early in the year taken the advice of Charles Stuart and sent every man that they could spare to Sicily, the British troops, acting in concert with the Turks, would in all probability have defeated and captured Bonaparte's army in Egypt. Such a misfortune would have so damaged his reputation that France would hardly have accepted him for a master.

However, the British Ministers had now discovered where to find an army; and they had, by good fortune, also found a man who could set their army in order. I have mentioned that in 1794 William Windham was sent on a mission to the Duke of York in Holland, and that, notwithstanding his good feeling towards the Duke personally, he was urgent and rightly urgent in pressing for his recall. To soften this humiliation he proposed that the Duke should be made Commander-in-Chief of the Army at home—that is to say, supreme military head of the British regular forces. Dundas was adverse to this. He thought, and Pitt agreed

with him, that 'the business of the War Office would go fully as well on without the interruption of any military adviser interposed between the King and the office'. This sentence shows that Dundas, and presumably Pitt also, were completely ignorant of the real functions of a Commander-in-Chief. Pitt, however, saw the value of the suggestion for purposes of conciliating the King, who was much offended by the apparent slight put upon his favourite son. Accordingly, in the spring of 1795 the Duke was appointed Field-Marshal on the Staff, which title was changed in 1798 to its true significance of Commander-in-Chief. Little did Ministers dream that by throwing, as they thought, a mere sop to their Sovereign, they were rendering a transcendent service to their country. The administration of the Horse Guards, as the military side of the War Office was called, was absolutely chaotic when the Duke took it over; and such fragments of an army as then existed were in consequence wholly without order or system. Officers knew not whether to turn for advancement to their military or to their political chiefs, and found it generally more profitable to look to the latter. The result was that the Army at large lacked the spirit which is of the essence of an army, namely discipline.

To all this the Duke put a stop at once. He began by banishing altogether the interference of civilians in matters of purely military concern; reorganized his office; thought out and introduced a uniform system for training the different units of the Army; and established a definite chain of responsibility, from the Commander-in-Chief down to the private soldier, which of itself did very much to restore discipline.

To revive the confidence of all ranks in their military superiors, he made it a rule never to refuse a personal interview to any officer who considered himself aggrieved. The humblest subaltern could carry his story to the Commander-in-Chief, where he could be sure of a patient hearing and, so far as human nature permits, of a just decision thereupon. Though by no means of brilliant talents the Duke possessed solid ability, considerable knowledge of his profession and plenty of common sense, which he supplemented by indefatigable industry. Further, he made good his own deficiencies by the selection of an excellent staff who worked as hard as he did. Under his rule the chaos in the Horse Guards changed by magic into order. By an excellent system of returns, unknown until his advent, the Duke was able to give Ministers at any moment the latest information as to the strength and condition of every part of the Army in every quarter of the globe. Yet he never encroached upon the province of Ministers by recommending to them military operations. If they consulted him, he was ready to give his opinion; but he recognized that his business was to prepare a weapon for the hand of Ministers, not to show them how to wield it. As to organization, methods of recruiting, and so forth, which were matters within his province, he was free with his recommendations; and very good recommendations they were. But if Ministers said to him, 'We want to send away a strong armament as early as possible. How many men can you give us?' he was ready with his answer: 'I can give you so many thousand fit for any service; so many thousand more not so good, but improving rapidly. The first division can be at Ports-



mouth, ready to embark, on this day week; the second on this day ten days; the whole upon this day three weeks. I await your orders.' So far the frightful drain of the West Indies had given him few men to command; but, now that the country was using the Militia as a recruiting dépôt, he was obtaining many men, and he had framed his organization to be ready to receive them. Only those who know the history of the Army intimately before his time can appreciate the service that the Duke of York rendered to his country. The man who commanded the army in the Peninsula was the Duke of Wellington; but the man who made the army for him to command was the Duke of York.

But unfortunately while this good work was going forward in England, still better work was going forward in France. On the 9th of November—the 18th Brumaire—Bonaparte had overthrown the Directory by force of arms, and promulgated a new constitution of an extremely elaborate nature, which may, however, be summed up in the three words, Bonaparte, First Consul. He was vested in fact with autocratic power far exceeding that ever enjoyed by any French Sovereign; and he had need of it. The state of France was appalling. Every branch of administration needed to be reorganized; and the financial confusion was past all belief. Thanks also to the doles and encouragement of Windham, the Royalists of La Vendée had again become active. With extreme sagacity, admirable courage and incredible industry, Bonaparte set himself to the task of overcoming all these difficulties, reorganizing the administration, conciliating the Royalists and contriving,

though by very strange shifts, even to raise a little money. He found some encouragement in the rupture of the Coalition. Grenville had laboured hard to heal the breach, but in conciliating Austria he had only succeeded in alienating Russia; and the Tsar retired from the alliance in high dudgeon both with Austria and Great Britain. Even so, however, the Austrians could put 70,000 men into the field in Italy to complete the work begun in the previous year, against whom the French could for the present oppose only 30,000. It was therefore important to press the French hard before they could be reinforced, and accordingly orders were sent in February 1800 to the Austrian General Melas to drive the French from the Riviera, while the British squadron under Lord Keith cut off all succours that could reach the enemy by sea.

It was probably to avert this early movement that Bonaparte, at the end of December 1799, addressed to George the Third proposals for peace, in his usual theatrical style. To these Grenville drew up a reply, likewise in his most characteristic manner—a long, solemn, pompous lecture, didactic and unconciliatory to the last degree. That Grenville should have written a document in such terms is easily intelligible. He simply yielded to his natural instinct; but that the rest of the Cabinet should have allowed it to pass uncorrected is amazing. George the Third, who was the most untamable opponent of the Revolution, returned it with the words, ‘In my opinion much too strong; but I suppose it must go’; but Ministers did not take the hint. Pitt was himself too much of a Grenville to see any objection to Grenville’s draft. Dundas was probably indifferent as to the form in which the note might be

clothed, so only its sense were unmistakable; while, being himself much given to verbiage he perhaps enjoyed its prolixity. The Whigs, with the memory of Burke's declamations strong upon them, quite possibly thought it none too forcible or severe. Not one of them appears to have been alive to its absurdity. The matter was of small importance, except that it furnished Fox with a good text for a speech in the House of Commons, and provided also an example at once of Grenville's ruling passion and of the old King's strong good sense.

However, after so defiant an answer, it was to be expected that the Government would take vigorous military measures. For a country which could do as it pleased by sea, the Austrian campaign in Italy furnished an ideal opportunity for effective use of a small but compact force. General Charles Stuart advocated the instant dispatch of twenty thousand men to Minorca, from whence they could be transported to whatever point on the coast might be most damaging to the French army. But now the British Government became suddenly enamoured of co-operation with the Royalists in La Vendée, who, as I have said, had again become restless. Constant negotiations passed between them and Windham during the winter, and large supplies of warlike stores were landed. Unfortunately Bonaparte had also been busy among the insurgent leaders, and his conciliatory offers had reclaimed most of them to peace with the Republic. Still Windham would not give up his cherished project, and there seems to have been a pitched battle between him and Dundas over the use that was to be made of England's handful of troops. At last their differences were com-



promised by sending six thousand men to capture the island of Belleisle off the coast of Brittany, and five thousand, under Sir Ralph Abercromby, to Minorca. The six thousand found the task committed to them beyond their strength; the five thousand, who were supposed to rove about the Mediterranean and do something, were of course too weak to accomplish aught. Meanwhile, Bonaparte led an army over the Alps to take the forces of General Melas in rear; and Melas cried loudly to the British to come to his assistance. Abercromby hastened with his handful of men to Genoa, but arrived too late. On the 14th of June Bonaparte established his own fortunes and restored those of France by the victory of Marengo. Two days later Dundas gave orders that the troops, which had been sent to Belleisle and Minorca, should be united and taken to the help of the Austrians. The same order given three months earlier would probably have spoiled Bonaparte's campaign. To make their mistakes still more obvious the Government in August augmented the force in the Mediterranean to over 20,000 men, and kept them sailing about, looking for something to do. These 20,000 men, properly directed by Charles Stuart in the spring, would almost certainly have overthrown the Revolution Militant.

1792 Here then was another year of flagrant blundering, perhaps the worst in the history of the war; and Pitt was now matched against an antagonist who allowed no blunder to pass unpunished. Bonaparte had succeeded in attaching Spain to France by treaty, so as to put pressure upon Portugal; he had also succeeded in alienating Russia from England. The Tsar was

even working for a revival of the Armed Neutrality of 1780 to curb the power of England on the sea. In these circumstances the British Ministers decided to attack the French army which was isolated in Egypt, in case they should be compelled to withdraw the Mediterranean fleet to the Baltic. Events, however, moved too rapidly for them. In December the Austrians, having been decisively defeated by Moreau at Hohenlinden, sued for peace at any price; and before the year ended the Armed Neutrality had become an accomplished fact. Once again England was left without a friend, and with many formidable enemies, in Europe.

However, the Armed Neutrality was met by Nelson's attack upon Copenhagen; and Abercromby, in obedience to orders, carried his army to Egypt. Once again there had been serious differences between Dundas and Windham over this expedition; Windham maintaining that Abercromby's force was too small, and the information of the Cabinet as to the French in Egypt very insufficient. Windham, as a matter of fact, was quite correct. The French army proved to be twice as strong as had been reported; and, but for the mistakes of the French general, Abercromby must certainly have been defeated and foiled. Old Sir Ralph was perfectly aware that more was required of him than any Government had the right to ask, but he merely observed quietly, 'There are risks in a British warfare unknown to any other army,' and went on his way. By great skill and yet greater good fortune he accomplished his landing, and was mortally wounded not many days later in the action that decided the campaign.

Before the news reached England, Pitt had resigned. He had hurried on his project of Union with Ireland, most unreasonably, while the war was at its height; but, when matters came to a point, he lacked the foresight to disarm and the determination to overcome the opposition which was certain to be provoked by some of its most essential conditions. He therefore carried the Union as a mutilated measure, shorn of all that was most necessary for the conciliation of Ireland. Once again his inveterate prudence had been too strong for him. He did, indeed, resign over the question of Catholic Emancipation, but very unwillingly, and under the pressure of Grenville and other men more determined than himself. It was said, and the story is still repeated, that he abandoned office only because he perceived peace to be inevitable, and thought that some other Minister could conduct the negotiations better than himself. But against this, it is certain that he offered to resume office a month after he had left it; and Pitt was by no means a man who liked to leave important business to other people. On the contrary, he loved to do everything himself, and having already entered upon two distinct parleys for peace, he was not likely to think himself disqualified to arrange the final details of a general pacification.

Even so, however, there remains the mystery why his colleagues were content to leave England to the control of other men at such a time, and why they were so anxious that Pitt should not entangle himself with new political colleagues. I incline to the belief that Grenville and Windham were aware of his inclination towards peace, to which they themselves were



bitterly opposed, and preferred that he should resign together with them upon the question of Catholic Relief, rather than compel them to leave him upon the question of overtures to France. The truth seems to be that Pitt's health was failing, that his powers were beginning to decline under the continual stress of work, that he was losing influence in his Cabinet, and that his colleagues wished to give him a short rest, so that he might return to office with his health renewed and with his position towards the King definitely and permanently strengthened. It is, I think, certain that some at any rate of them were disappointed in their leader, and that his ascendancy over them was decidedly shaken. Grenville, I am convinced, though his general confidence in Pitt was undiminished, never forgave him for offering the olive-branch to France in 1797. I do not think that Grenville was influenced by petty vexation at being overborne, but I am sure that from that moment Pitt was lowered in his estimation. The same I believe to be true of Windham, and I cannot doubt but that both of them were irritated by his flexibility upon the subject of Catholic Relief, as presenting a second example of a prudence which amounted, in their sight, to weakness.

It was while still chafing against this irresolution in his leader that Windham wrote the letter, quoted to you in my first lecture, comparing Pitt with Edmund Burke, and deciding that Burke was the greater of the twain. Comparison between the two men is, however, impossible. Burke was essentially a thinker, and moreover one of those rare thinkers who cannot contemplate human institutions apart from human nature. A political constitution, for instance, was to Burke not

a code of articles, nor a carefully devised machine, wherein weight and counter-weight, control and counter-control are balanced against each other. It was rather something alive—a concourse of bustling men with more prejudices than principles, and more passion than prejudice; fallible men with their pageantries and pedantries, their intrigues and their jobbery, and all the strange appliances and artifices that go to the government of mankind. Vast historical knowledge, and long pondering thereupon, wide sympathy and a vivid imagination enabled Burke to divine the probable course that would be taken by a nation under certain conditions; and certainly no prophet ever delivered oracles more stately and less ambiguous. His insight told him, for instance, at once that ninety-nine Frenchmen out of a hundred clung in their hearts to the old order, and were content with the removal of its worst abuses as effected by the Constituent Assembly. When, therefore, the Vendéans rose up and organized themselves to fight under their natural leaders for their old religion, Burke perceived forthwith that these were men worth helping. They could rally every Conservative in France to their side to put down the tyranny of the scum of Paris. They knew what they wanted. They could restore the old order; and, until that old order, modified by the best work of the Constituent Assembly, were re-established, there could be no permanent peace with France. To have apprehended this at the very outset amid all the turmoil of the time was that which no living man but Burke could have done. I do not say that he was uninfluenced by his own feeling for the picturesque side of ancient institutions, but he was

guided in the main by sound reasoning upon human nature. This alone is sufficient to mark him out as a very great man.

But though Burke could draw out her course for the ship of State, sketch in broad lines her sailing orders, and point out the most dangerous rocks and shoals, he was utterly unfit to take command of her. He was not made to govern men. He could sway, persuade, and enlighten governors, if they would consent to listen to him; but he could not govern. With all his human sympathy he was impatient of contradiction, intolerant of opposition and uncomprehending of human stupidity. As Prime Minister he would have set the Cabinet and the whole of the Public Departments by the ears in a fortnight. In military matters he would have wrecked promising plans by wild, sanguine, and unpractical calculations. In foreign transactions he would have been extravagantly generous and trustful towards some Courts, violently impracticable towards others. He would have been a prey to impostors from all quarters, and would have quarrelled desperately with his best friends in their defence. Lastly, he would have been guilty of flagrant, shameless, and continuous jobs. The tendency to jobbery was his inheritance from his native land, and he could not resist it. Many have wondered, not without indignation, that a man whose brains and pen were utilized by Ministers and parties for decade after decade should never have held high office. I fear that Burke was not to be trusted with administrative work of any kind. For the organization of an office, for the definition of its work and the designation of its policy, no man could give advice that was wiser, sounder, and weightier



than Burke's. But he was a critic and a counsellor, not a leader of men.

Burke's mouthpiece in the Cabinet was of course Windham, and curiously enough Windham also shone only as a critic. In military matters, indeed, his comments were so able and searching that, but for his later career, one could judge him to have understood somewhat of the meaning of war. He had enjoyed the exceptional advantage of seeing something of active service on two missions to the Duke of York in 1793 and 1794. He had even been under fire, and had been relieved to find that he could endure the trial without great effort. He had, moreover, learned how much a neglect of little things in England may embarrass a general in the field abroad. 'One sits at home and overlooks such particulars as artillery-drivers,' he wrote to Pitt, 'but the fate of kingdoms and of armies is often decided by them.' This was a useful lesson which was greatly needed, in particular, by Dundas; but none the less Windham was not very practical, and, like his great master, was a singularly unfortunate jobber. Having control of all the foreign mercenaries raised abroad by the French Royalists, he founded a foreign department in the War Office, over which he set his brother-in-law, Robert Lukin, with one Emperor Woodford, another of his dependents, for Chief Clerk. These two contrived to expend a million and a half pounds sterling, with remarkably little to show for it. Woodford, indeed, who went abroad as Agent for Foreign Corps, was obliged to leave his native country in haste, being unable to account for £300,000 which had passed through his hands. This waste was the reason which prompted the Duke of

York, before its causes were revealed, to disband all foreign Royalist corps. The Duke's perfectly correct decision, as I have told you, raised a storm in the Whig camp. Burke raved and Windham raved ; and ultimately, as we have seen, some few of the corps were sent to Charles Stuart in Portugal. Windham was a man of the strictest personal honour, but he could not understand why a fuss should be made about a few millions for his own department.

With such defects as these it is not difficult to understand that Pitt should have looked upon Windham as unpractical and somewhat of a visionary, and should not have reckoned with him, in his capacity of critic, as Windham deserved. No doubt Pitt held Windham's opinions lightly, as those of a man who was easily duped ; and that Windham was to some extent duped by the Royalists there can be no question. Many of his clients were dishonest ; and even the best of them, the gallant fighting men in Brittany and La Vendée, were not always to be trusted to deal fairly with British money. But Windham was by no means the only member of the Cabinet who was thus imposed upon ; indeed there is hardly one who escaped such imposition. The subject is so curious that it is worth a moment's digression.

Sometimes the mischief was done by men who honestly deceived themselves, such as Malouet, a man not only of high mind but of remarkable wisdom. More often it was wrought by adventurers, in which species St. Domingo was particularly fruitful. One of these, Charmilli by name, was quite irrepressible, and persuaded the British Government to spend hundreds of thousands upon regiments which were supposed to

fight. In reality they existed chiefly to pour their pay into the pockets of the French planters who were their colonels, and to reap the crops of these same planters for their profit. Of course, as Dundas favoured Charmilli, the Duke of Portland would have nothing to say to him, but one friend in the Cabinet was quite sufficient for the man's purpose.

Another very prominent adventurer was Francisco Miranda, the Venezuelan, who at intervals for full thirty years intrigued with successive British Administrations to bring about a revolution in the Spanish colonies of South America. Pitt and Dundas were much attracted by his schemes, and, as we have seen, were on the point of sending an expedition to South America in 1797. Grenville, in whose province as Foreign Minister such matters more properly lay, disliked and distrusted Miranda, but we shall see that the man gained his point by working upon one of Pitt's minor advisers. This Miranda, who was an unprincipled and unscrupulous rogue, had served many masters, including the French Republic under Dumouriez, and was trusted by none.

Less conspicuous, but fully as suasive, were the emissaries from the Orange faction in Holland, who could always inspire Pitt, Dundas, and Grenville with the belief that their countrymen needed only the countenance of a British force to rise and drive out the French. Lastly, there were the men who, in some mysterious fashion, were able to convince Pitt that Prussia was about to draw the sword for the common cause—Prussia, whom all experience had shown to be incapable of an unselfish action.

It is evident to us now that far too much attention was paid to these men ; but it is certain that they must



have been individuals of considerable tact and address to retain their reputation as advisers for so long as they did. It must be added that Pitt and his colleagues generally were governed more than they should have been by young and irresponsible men from their own country as well as from abroad. Pitt in the matter of military and naval operations was much influenced by Home Popham of the Royal Navy, who was clever and energetic indeed, but not to be trusted. Grenville's unofficial prompter was Captain Sidney Smith of the same service, who was under the special protection of the Grenville family. Smith, again, was brave, clever, and restlessly active, but vain and shallow, and therefore not to be relied upon whether as diplomatic agent or naval officer. Both Popham and Smith were brilliant impostors, but, like their foreign fellows, they chose their time cunningly for approaching Ministers, and came to them stuffed with facts, figures, and pledges, one and all of them fallacious. Windham's military friends were more respectable, being Catlin Craufurd, whom he had known on the Duke of York's staff in Flanders, and his more famous brother, Robert Craufurd. Both were much employed as attachés to foreign armies, and did their work well, but Robert, in the matter of military reform, led Windham later into some dangerous pitfalls.

All this consultation with subordinate officers and inferior agents behind the backs of their superiors was in principle wrong, and in practice very mischievous. For, to return now to my main theme, it aggravated the greatest evil of the time, namely, that Pitt was not really master in his own Cabinet. The difficulties of controlling a Coalition Ministry are so formidable that

great allowance must be made for the Minister at its head. But it does not seem to me that Pitt chose the best way to decrease those difficulties. To carry on war with effect it is above all things necessary that there should be order at home and vigorous strokes abroad. To ensure order at home it was essential that the handling of great domestic questions should be deferred to a more convenient season. Pitt accordingly dropped all projects of Parliamentary reform; and the ablest of the Whigs, notably Windham, heartily seconded him even before they had consulted Burke. It is true that there was sedition in the country, but this would not have been soothed, rather it would have been stimulated, by the nostrums beloved of Fox, Sheridan, and Grey. There is no more mischievous notion than that social reform should be pushed forward during a war, or that it can make war more tolerable while it lasts. There was sedition chiefly because there was distress, and distress is a necessary part of war; for war means nothing else than the effort of one nation to distress another nation into yielding to its will. No people enjoy distress; wherefore they must be compelled to endure it. When a city is besieged a commandant does not propose measures of municipal reform: on the contrary, he issues drastic regulations for the maintenance of order, and enforces them without mercy. The British Isles were in the position of a besieged city from beginning to end of the war, and Pitt was therefore quite right to put down seditious movements with a high hand.

But the maintenance of order at home was intimately bound up with the subject of Ireland; and here the Whigs pressed for the great reform of Catholic relief.

Pitt was for postponing this until quieter times, as I venture to think, quite rightly; but his behaviour at the outset was irresolute, for he first half conceded the desire of the Whigs, and then withdrew his half concession. However, in withdrawing he was at any rate consistent, and having so far asserted his will over the Whigs, he might well have let Irish business alone until the advent of peace. Far from this, he attacked the question of Union at a most unpropitious time, and made domestic matters worse rather than better by abandoning the most essential parts of his scheme. He repeated, in fact, in 1800 his dealings with Ireland in 1794, namely, promise without performance, and even so without the excuse that it was essential to him to attach the Whigs to his own party.

In the matter of vigorous strokes abroad the Whigs, as we have seen, claimed decidedly that their voice should be heard. Pitt played the same game with them as he played in Irish affairs. He made Windham Secretary at War, charged him especially with the duty of looking to the Whigs' military policy, and thereby encouraged him to make promises to the Royalists which Pitt had no intention of fulfilling. The absurd part of the business was that Pitt himself was spending millions of money and tens of thousands of men upon West Indian Royalists, who were far less trustworthy than Windham's clients. It was therefore difficult to refuse occasional doles of money to Windham, doles sometimes even of men, and it became increasingly so when his own policy had been proved a failure, while Windham's remained still untried. Pitt took refuge therefore in a series of compromises, with the result that British troops were to be found making demon-



strations at many points, but nowhere in strength sufficient to produce the slightest effect.

I confess that I find this fault in Pitt to be absolutely unpardonable. Compromise is often dangerous and mischievous enough in the matter of domestic legislation, but in war, when the lives of men and the safety and resources of the country are at stake, it is positively wicked. I am myself firmly persuaded that the military policy of the Whigs was, in principle, better than that of Pitt, but since Pitt was convinced to the contrary, it was his duty—nothing less than his duty—to throw all his strength into the execution of that policy which he preferred. The consequences, at the worst, could not have been more disastrous than they actually were; and many embarrassing entanglements might have been avoided. Above all, he would have asserted the principle that in no case should more than one military policy be pursued at the same time. Having, however, almost from the first permitted the violation of this principle, he went on in the same course to the last; and hence the miserable and deplorable fiasco of the year 1800, which deferred the final pacification of Europe for fifteen years. If Pitt did not realize the inevitable consequences of this line of conduct, then we cannot form a high opinion of his judgement. If he did—if, that is, he saw the right, and yet pursued the wrong—then we can make but a low estimate of his resolution. My own view is that from beginning to end he was what is called an opportunist in the matter of military policy. His attack on the West Indies, initiated under the influence of Dundas, was designed to please the public by advertisement of victories, which he thought would be

cheap, but proved to be ruinous. But Holland cried out for the aid of British troops, and then it was, 'Oh yes, send troops to Holland, and let them besiege Dunkirk, because' (here I quote his real words) 'it is so near as to give a good impression of the war in England'. But Toulon was offered to the British by the French Royalists. 'Oh yes, send troops to Toulon.' And Corsica also invited a British garrison. 'Oh yes, send troops to Corsica.' But, with all these enterprises, could troops be spared for the West Indies? 'Oh yes, we cannot give up our expedition to the West Indies.' Then the Royalists in Vendée wanted help. 'Oh yes, we will send them troops as soon as we have done with Holland; it will keep the Whigs quiet.' But where were all the troops to come from? 'Oh, raise men somehow or anyhow, as Lord Chatham did. We'll spend a couple of millions in buying Polish soldiers.<sup>1</sup> Hang the expense; it won't last long.' But the French threatened invasion, and the country was alarmed. 'Oh, let every man turn out for its defence, as he thinks best and easiest for himself.' A menace of invasion was, as we have seen, enough to make him withdraw the fleet from the Mediterranean, without a thought of averting the danger by a counter-offensive movement. Such was Pitt the War Minister. It is small wonder that he lost influence in his Cabinet.

None the less had he great qualities which made him, what Burke was not, a leader of men. In the first place he never shrank from taking responsibility, and was very quick to perceive when it was for him to

<sup>1</sup> Pitt to Windham, Sept. 10, 1794. Pitt actually thought of this at one moment. B.M. *Add. MS.* 37844.

assume it. Once, for instance, in the autumn of 1794, important dispatches arrived from the Duke of York, reporting a change in the military situation which demanded a complete alteration of policy. Dundas, in whose department such matters lay, happened to be absent from London. Thereupon Pitt, without consulting a soul, at once sat down and wrote new instructions, at some length though with perfect clearness, in his own hand. Next, he possessed rare courage and constancy in all misfortunes, turning his thoughts at once to find a remedy, without a moment lost in repining. These gifts were the more remarkable, for he was of a singularly sanguine temper, and sanguine natures are apt to be mercurial. But Pitt could never fall to zero, though he was quite capable of rising to boiling-point. When the news of the victory of the Nile arrived, he wrote a letter to Windham beginning: 'Vive la marine anglaise! Vive le Pasha Djezzar! After reading the bulletin of to-day I hope you will give me some credit for my philosophy.'<sup>1</sup> A schoolboy could not have written with greater exultation; and it is pleasant to think that, while his colleagues were croaking, Pitt still retained his boyish lightness of heart. These, combined with pre-eminent ability, were the qualities that kept his Cabinet, for all its just discontent, in subservience to him. Grenville and Windham were men at least as brave and resolute as himself, Grenville perhaps even more resolute and certainly less disposed to compromise. But they lacked Pitt's boundless self-confidence. I do not think myself that they would have been guilty of Pitt's worst blunders, but, if they had been, they would assuredly have sunk

<sup>1</sup> Pitt to Windham, Sept. 10, 1794. B.M. *Add. MS.* 37844.



under the weight of them. Pitt, whether before the House of Commons or before the nation, always stood up undaunted in his own defence. The most damaging criticisms of Fox, Sheridan, and Shelburne—and Shelburne's were the most searching and unanswerable of all—left him unharmed. It was as though a torrent of water had been turned upon a swan: the only effect was to make him float a little higher. For, whatever mistakes he might make, the nation felt vaguely but rightly that he was a fearless and a good man, who would do his best for his country without a thought for himself. Canning aptly expressed the general feeling when, in comment upon Windham's severe criticisms on Pitt, he wrote, 'Whether Pitt *will* save us, I do not know, but surely he is the only man that *can*.' It was his noble spirit and lofty example which trained the nation to self-denial and endurance, and trained also the younger generation of statesmen to a like courage and constancy with his own. It is true that these younger statesmen avoided Pitt's blunders, and proved themselves generally to be superior to him as War Ministers. But the people had to forgive them, and did forgive them, for Walcheren, as they had forgiven Pitt for St. Domingo; and they rallied even to so comparatively small a man as Perceval, when, with a haughtiness worthy of Pitt himself, he defied all the might of Napoleon. Had Pitt been a great War Minister, Napoleon's wonderful career might never have come to pass; but even with all his limitations he was, as M. Sorel says, the only great adversary that was encountered by the French Revolution and by Napoleon himself, because he was great enough to lead a great nation.

## LECTURE V

UPON the resignation of Pitt his place was taken, as you know, by Henry Addington, whose father had been Pitt's doctor during the days of his delicate youth. There is little to be said of him beyond Canning's pregnant epigram :

Pitt is to Addington  
As London is to Paddington,

for his ability was no more than respectable. He possessed, however, some share of shrewd judgement, and was the author of a saying which always endears him to me—' No man is fit to be a Minister to whom it is not a matter of indifference whether he dies in his bed or on the scaffold.' Addington, moreover, acted in accordance with his words. In fact, like most public men of his time, he was endowed with courage, a gift which has not been allotted in equal measure to the politicians of our own day.

As a Prime Minister, Addington possessed the advantage of being extremely acceptable to the King, who enjoyed the change from a strong to an amenable man. He was a kindly, affectionate creature, and probably felt a softness beyond his natural pliability towards the monarch who, after forty years of a most difficult and trying reign, was beginning to falter under the infirmities of age. On the other hand, the new Prime Minister could not but be painfully conscious that he held power only by the sufferance of Pitt. He

concluded the Treaty of Amiens with Pitt's approval, but strongly against the opinion of Grenville, Windham, and the King. Addington called the truce an experiment. Pitt defended it upon the ground that the nation needed rest. But there could be no real rest for England with such an enemy as Bonaparte at her gates. She was still obliged to maintain her military and naval establishments upon a war-footing; and, this being so, she might as well have kept them employed as have kept them idle. As a matter of fact, she would have done much better to continue the war, for Bonaparte had commended himself to the French nation mainly by his promise to give them peace. It was towards a fulfilment of that undertaking that the victory of Marengo was so much welcomed; and, if the promise after all had been disappointed, his ascendancy over France would certainly have been delayed, possibly indeed would never have attained to the full measure which it actually reached in later years. The difference of opinion in this matter of the peace widened the breach between Windham and Grenville on the one side, and Pitt on the other.

After devoting his principal legislative efforts to the amendment of the existing organization for internal defence, Addington was compelled in May, 1803, to renew the war. The question of military policy, therefore, again became pressing. In one quarter Addington's task was easy. Immediately upon the signature of peace Napoleon had made the gigantic blunder of sending a powerful armament to reconquer St. Domingo. His troops died as fast there as had those of the British; and he was thoroughly entangled in a disastrous enterprise when, to his great surprise, England



declared war upon him. With England's vast naval superiority at his back, no Minister could miss the chance of cutting off the remnant of the French force in St. Domingo. About seven thousand prisoners were taken, very many of them by their own entreaty, so thoroughly did they loathe service in the West Indies; and it may be said with little exaggeration that the expedition cost France every man, to the number of forty thousand, and every ship that took part in it. This done, Addington followed Pitt's example by capturing all other Dutch and French possessions that could easily be taken in the Antilles, in order to make a show of activity in the *Gazette*. These operations profited England little, and injured France not at all. If they were less mischievous than those of 1793, it was only because negro troops had been largely substituted for white in the garrisons of the British West Indies.

{ Napoleon, however, having no enemy but England on his hands, made every preparation to reduce her by invasion, and began to mass troops for that purpose on the coast from Boulogne northward. There were two ways of meeting this menace. The one was to send a fleet and twenty or thirty thousand men to Sicily, in order to make descents upon the coast of Italy; a course which would have forced Napoleon to strengthen his Italian garrisons, and for that purpose to break up the camp at Boulogne. The other was to call up every possible man for the protection of the British Isles, and to await Napoleon's attack in an attitude of passive defence. The latter course, being the wrong one, was naturally that selected by Addington; and he added to this delinquency the worst

possible measures for placing the population under arms. It was really monstrous that, after ten years of war and endless threats of invasion, no proper organization for defence should have been thought out by the previous Government; and this at least was no fault of Addington. He had, however, the blunders of his predecessors before him, and might have been expected to avoid repeating them. Repeat them, however, in great measure he did, working meanwhile always with a diffidence, feebleness, and uncertainty which produced endless confusion. How far he was guided or inspired by Pitt it is difficult to say; but it is certain that he was overawed by him. He endeavoured at all hazards to please the great man, who from time to time condescended to honour him with his counsel. In particular, Addington produced a plan for augmenting the Regular Army, which undoubtedly emanated from Pitt in the first instance; but, by Pitt's account, did not contain some of his most valuable suggestions. In any case it was a foolish and expensive failure.

This unspeakable mismanagement of military affairs at so critical a time provoked extreme exasperation in Grenville, Windham, and their followers. They became more and more indignant that Pitt should countenance so poor a statesman as Addington at the helm, instead of at once thrusting him down and taking the wheel himself. The position was very absurd, for in Parliament Pitt was omnipotent and the Government of no importance; while even in his foremost measures, whether financial or military, Addington bowed always to the will of Pitt. The late Prime Minister, therefore, was still a corrector though not a ruler, and so far

made himself more or less responsible for a great deal of highly mischievous legislation. Very soon Grenville and Windham came to a definite agreement for co-operation with Fox, and pressed Pitt to do likewise. He refused; and continued to wait while Addington floundered into folly upon folly over the organization of military defence. Finally, the Government became so weak that it abandoned a hopeless position; and the King called upon Pitt to form a new Administration.

Pitt at the outset took the line of making Fox and his followers the backbone of his Cabinet. Two out of the three Secretaryships of State were to be given to Fox and Fitzwilliam, and one only, that for War, was reserved for Dundas, now become Lord Melville. Grey was to be Secretary at War, evidently with something of the same position that Windham had held, to uphold the military policy, whatever it might be, of the Foxites. Windham and Grenville were to be relegated to the two unimportant offices of the Duchy of Lancaster and the Presidency of the Council. For the moment Fox was willing to serve under Pitt; but the King declined to admit him to his councils upon any terms, though consenting to receive his followers; and, looking to the fact that the King's mind had lately been unhinged, Pitt after many struggles gave up the thought of overbearing him. This concession to the King definitely alienated Grenville and his followers from Pitt, while the adherents of Fox, though encouraged by their leader for the moment to join the new Ministry, likewise held themselves aloof. Pitt was compelled, therefore, to fall back upon younger and less distinguished men, and he did so with outspoken



defiance of Grenville. 'I will teach that proud man,' he said, 'that in the service and with the confidence of the King, I can do without him, though I think my health such that it may cost me my life.'

Much severe language has been used over Grenville's refusal to help Pitt at this juncture. He had pressed hard for the inclusion of the best men of all parties at such a dangerous crisis in the country's history, though a year before he had been willing to agree to the exclusion of Fox. It is pleaded on the other hand, upon Pitt's behalf, that the King would have returned to Addington as Prime Minister, if Pitt had stood out for his own opinion, and that Pitt was justifiably unwilling to risk such a catastrophe, aggravated, as it was very likely to be, by the King's relapse into mental illness. It is difficult, if not impossible, to decide which party was in the right. What is certain is, that Grenville, Windham, Spencer, and other of Pitt's late colleagues thought that their leader had been degenerating for some time past into greater weakness and irresolution—they even added the hard word, insincerity—and were resolved to abandon him unless he amended his ways. In fact, they had decided in their own minds that it was not right at this crisis to place Pitt and Dundas once again in practically uncontrolled command of the policy and resources of England. It is generally assumed that they were merely playing the game of party, and they are therefore dubbed unpatriotic. But this is to beg the whole question of Pitt's fitness to guide England through a second war far more formidable than the first. Had Pitt shown himself a particularly capable Minister of War? My answer is—and I have given my reasons for it—that

he had not; nay more, that he had conducted affairs from 1793 to 1801 exceedingly ill, with the important exception, however, of financial business. He fully deserved to have been thrown out of office in 1795 and in 1796; and, if Fox had behaved as a man of sense and principle, instead of as a mischievous, petulant schoolboy, undoubtedly Pitt would have fallen. I see therefore nothing unreasonable or unpatriotic in the action of Grenville and his followers, when they declined to support Pitt upon his merits. Let it once be realized, as I think it should be, that Pitt was a thoroughly bad War Minister, and that his failing health promised little prospect of his improvement; and their conduct appears in a different light.

There remains the question whether, ill-fitted though Pitt was to conduct a great war, any better man would have been found to replace him. I must repeat again the words of Canning when he wrote to Windham in 1802:—‘Whether Pitt *will* save us, I do not know, but surely he is the only man that *can*.’ It will presently be seen that the following of Grenville and Fox, working together, managed military affairs fully as ill as Pitt himself; but when the direction of the war passed out of their hands, a man was at once found who could handle it infinitely better than the whole of Pitt’s Cabinet of 1794 put together. It is urged finally, that Pitt’s supporters would not have suffered him to take in Fox as a fellow Minister, and would have preferred Addington, who was a great favourite with the country gentlemen, to such a combination. Considering, however, that the country accepted Grenville and Fox in 1806, I can hardly believe that it could not have been brought to accept Fox, working under Pitt as Prime

Minister, in 1803. If Pitt was, as Canning thought, the only man who could save England, surely his ascendancy must have been such that he could have made his own terms. But serious as the internal condition of England was, I am disposed to think that Canning misinterpreted it. The true reason for the unpopularity of the war was that the British arms had been generally unsuccessful. Canning appears to have assumed then what most of our countrymen seem to assume now—that the failure of the Army was due to the faults of the generals. It was not. It was due to the faults of the Ministers.

Though driven to form his Ministry of men who were then considered to be of the second rank, Pitt was able to include in it three future Prime Ministers, namely, Spencer Perceval, Canning, and Hawkesbury; one more, Lord Harrowby, who refused to be Prime Minister; and a fifth, greater than them all, Lord Castlereagh. Of his former colleagues, the only distinguished man who remained with him was Henry Dundas, Lord Melville, who took over the Admiralty. The new Administration, in fact, was wealthy in talent, and weak only in speech; and I have never been able to understand why it should be judged, as it invariably is, solely by its debating power. It must, however, be confessed that Pitt's Secretary of State for War, Lord Camden, was deplorably unequal to his position.

Having taken the reins into his hands, Pitt naturally and rightly turned his attention first to the defence of the country, menaced as it was by Napoleon's camp at Boulogne. The worst of Addington's mistakes in the matter of organization were corrected, but the system upon which it was based, being even more Pitt's than



Addington's was, though thoroughly vicious, left untouched. He also vigorously pushed forward the fortification of the country, himself riding round the works to inspect them, with an energy which Grenville condemned as ridiculous. Dundas, absurdly enough, emulated him by taking trips at sea to encourage the fleet. While Addington was in power, Pitt, as Colonel of the Cinque Ports Volunteers, had shown the greatest industry in exercising his men; and being thus familiar with the ground over which an invasion was likely to take place, and with the men who were to defend it, he may have thought that good work would result from the presence of the Prime Minister. Perhaps he was right; yet I cannot but think that he would have been better in Downing Street, where there was plenty for him to do.

2 Next, he devoted himself to the problem of increasing the Regular Army, a problem which Addington had tried to solve, under Pitt's advice, with extremely unsatisfactory results. Pitt brought forward an original scheme of his own, and in the face of much hard criticism and many predictions of its failure, insisted upon passing it. Windham was among the bitterest of the critics; he and his henchman, Colonel Robert Craufurd, having a rival scheme of their own—namely, compulsory training of every able-bodied man at home, with new inducements to these men to enlist voluntarily into the Army. These new inducements were in those days revolutionary, being nothing less than enlistment for a term of years only, instead of for life, with increase of pay upon re-engagement and liberal pensions for men who had served for twenty-one years. I mention these details with a purpose, for

Windham and Craufurd were convinced in their own minds that, if their plan were adopted, all difficulties in the way of recruiting the Army would vanish.

The year 1804 passed away without any invasion, but in December, Spain, after long and miserable hesitation, declared war against England ; and her fleet, being thrown into the same scale with that of France, naturally increased the danger of the situation. Pitt, however, had long prosecuted diplomatic as well as military preparations, exerting himself to gain in the first place Russia, and through her both Austria and Prussia, as allies. Napoleon, of course, worked against him with all the plenitude of his energy and craft ; but none the less Russia welcomed Pitt's overtures from the first, and in April, 1805, the treaty was signed. By this she engaged herself to furnish half a million of men at the rate of a million and a quarter sterling for every hundred thousand. Austria and Prussia were to be invited to join the alliance, and on doing so were to receive a million sterling apiece for the equipment of their armies. Pitt likewise agreed to give a small annual subsidy to Sweden in consideration of receiving the use of Stralsund as a military and commercial station. Whether it were prudent to make any agreement whatever with a country whose King was an autocrat and at the same time a lunatic may be doubted ; but the thing was done, with consequences which were later to prove very serious.

Meanwhile Napoleon's dispositions of the Toulon fleet seemed to point to operations in the Mediterranean ; either in Egypt, as Nelson believed, or possibly in Sicily. To allow Sicily to fall into French hands would have

been almost to hand over to France the mastery of the Mediterranean; and Pitt rightly bethought him of looking to the security of the island before it was too late. Accordingly, in March he ordered a reinforcement of 5,000 men to Malta. This was a repetition of his incurable fault of frittering away his military force in small detachments. Five thousand men were more than were necessary to reinforce the Mediterranean garrisons for a defensive attitude; but too few to take the offensive. If he had sent 25,000, he would have compelled Napoleon to break up the camp at Boulogne, as I have already said. But, you will object, while the camp at Boulogne lasted, it would not have been safe to send away so many regular troops out of England. To this I rejoin, that if it were not safe to send 25,000 men abroad for a good purpose, which I do not admit; how can it have been safe to send 5,000 away for no purpose at all? And more than that, how came it about that England could not spare 25,000 men for the Mediterranean? I answer, because Pitt's plan for recruiting the Regular Army had proved a ludicrous failure. He was obliged to abandon it in March, 1805, and to fall back on the system of bribing men to leave the Militia and join the Army. Since even these men could not join their new regiments till the end of June, it follows that Pitt lost twelve months of precious time in effecting that which should have been accomplished in three months. Here, therefore, were two more great military blunders committed before he had been a year in office.

Now, however, he had a chance of correcting them. As the year advanced Austria inclined more and more to renew hostilities with France; and on the 9th of



August she joined the Anglo-Russian alliance. A fortnight later Napoleon gave his troops at Boulogne their orders to march for the Danube. The menace of invasion was over. It might have been most formidable, but in reality it had never become serious, because Napoleon from the first had built his plans upon a false foundation, and had been guilty of blunder upon blunder. Now therefore was the time to send a really powerful force to the Mediterranean. The King of Naples had joined the coalition; the Russians had promised to send troops to join the British in the Neapolitan dominions; and the Austrians were concentrating 90,000 men under the Archduke Charles on the Adige. Here was the moment to increase the British force to 30,000 men, and to advance northward upon the French from Naples, while the Archduke pressed on them from the north-east. With Napoleon fully occupied on the Danube, the Allies could hardly have failed to recover Italy. But it was not to be. Instead of assailing Napoleon's flank on his march eastwards, from Italy in the south, where superiority at sea would have told very promptly, Pitt determined to fall upon the French from the north, in company with another detachment of Russians, a small army of Swedes, and, it was hoped, a powerful host of Prussians.

His first idea was to recover Hanover; the second, to regain Holland. Both depended entirely upon the attitude of Prussia; for, unless she joined the alliance, the operations must come to naught owing to the weakness of the Allies. Pitt sent 26,000 men to the Weser in the hope that, by beginning operations without the Prussians, he might force them to join him; and he actually placed these British troops under the

personal command of the mad King of Sweden for that purpose. I do not know if he was aware what he was doing when he thus committed so large a force (according to the standard of those days) to the control of a lunatic for active service in the field. I hope not, for it was a monstrous thing to do, and led one of his pupils to copy him later on. However, all dangers from King Gustavus were fortunately nullified by the refusal of Prussia to join the alliance; for of course she did refuse. No one who knew anything of King Frederick William and of the Court of Berlin, and had followed the actions of the latter since 1795, could have doubted that the Prussian King would betray any and all who counted upon him. Yet in spite of countless warnings Pitt always hoped to turn Prussia to some useful account; and he was spurred on to this unprofitable course by his craze for operations in Holland. These two stumbling-blocks, which had tripped him in 1799, now did so for the second time in 1805. Meanwhile in October Napoleon surrounded the advance corps of Mack at Ulm; and the Archduke Charles was compelled to fall back with the Army of Italy into Moravia, hard pressed by the French. On the 2nd of December the remainder of the Austrians, together with the Russians, were utterly overthrown at Austerlitz, and a few days later the Coalition was broken up by the secession of Austria. If the force sent to Hanover had been sent instead to the Mediterranean, the 30,000 British alone, quite apart from any Russians and Neapolitans that might have joined them, would have made such a diversion as must have embarrassed, and might wholly have wrecked, the plans of Napoleon.

Austerlitz was the death of Pitt. Earlier in the

year he had been greatly shaken by the charges against his old colleague, Henry Dundas, of speculation of the funds of the Navy. There had been unpleasant rumours some years before that Dundas had been employing public money, not for his own profit—for there was never any hint of that—but for purposes not sanctioned by law. On that occasion Pitt had asked Dundas bluntly whether there were any truth in the insinuation, and had been answered with as blunt a negative. The discovery that, after all, Dundas was guilty of the fault imputed to him wounded Pitt deeply, and estranged him so far from his former colleague that he was hardly on speaking terms with him. Pitt's friends thought that he might well join in the general censure of Dundas, but the Prime Minister considered himself bound in honour to defend him; and it is not easy to quarrel with such generosity as this. We can only wish that Pitt would have extended the like magnanimity to Warren Hastings in his hour of trial. The scene at the close of the debate on the question whether Dundas should be impeached is well known. Upon a division the numbers were found to be equal; and Speaker Abbott, pale with agitation, hesitated for long before he gave his casting vote for the impeachment. Then Pitt was seen to crush his cocked hat low over his brows; and those near him, seeing the tears trickle down his cheeks, formed a screen about him lest the enemy should behold his sorrow and blaspheme. The trial was indeed hard for one who, in prosperity and adversity alike, had always held his head so high; for this defeat signified that his ascendancy in Parliament and in the country was seriously shaken. So far all blunders had



been forgiven to him for his noble and unselfish patriotism, but now he was no longer to be spared. The great victory of Trafalgar, and the absence of any actual defeat of our troops in the field, did something to conceal his latest military failure. But if that failure had been repeated—and beyond all doubt his vicious methods would have ensured such repetition—then the long list of his abortive military enterprises since 1793 would have been hurled in his teeth, and he would have fallen from power with a crash. Nor, I fear, would the fall have been undeserved.

From this humiliation death delivered him, and we may be thankful that it did so. It is difficult to believe that Pitt would have improved with age. It has been said of him with much force and truth that he did not grow, but was cast—cast in a grand mould, it is true, but still rigid, circumscribed, incapable of extension. The years must bring their changes for all of us, and where those changes cannot be for the better they must be for the worse. Time, I believe, could never have diminished Pitt's lofty spirit of public duty, nor impaired that moderation and willingness to hear all sides of a question which was so justly admired by Wilberforce. But, on the other hand, time could never have amended his ignorance of human nature, nor a certain sanguine self-sufficiency which too often deterred him from seeing things aright. 'It will be a very short war,' he said in 1793, 'and certainly ended in one or two campaigns.' 'No, sir,' said Burke, 'it will be a long war and a dangerous war, but it must be undertaken.' 'Pitt less sanguine than formerly,' wrote Wilberforce in April, 1799, when England had practically no army in existence, 'but hoping that six

months will see the thing out.' 'Pitt sanguine,' he wrote again in August, 'sanguine in hope of co-operation in Holland.' 'Pitt sanguine,' he wrote once again in February, 1800, 'that Russians and Austrians are quite well agreed . . . yet within a week Russians marching home, quarrelling with Austrians.' Finally he died of a broken heart, because Russians and Austrians in 1805 were defeated at Austerlitz. And where was the British Army? Early in the war, in 1794, a soldier at the front, Sir Henry Calvert, had written: 'We must depend on our own exertions. . . . I repeat it again and again and again: we have nothing to rely on but Providence and our own exertions.' It was Pitt's weakness that he never took these wise words to heart.

Thus he was fortunate in dying when he did. 'The time and circumstances of his death were peculiarly affecting,' wrote Wilberforce once more, 'and I really believe, however incredulous you may be, that it dwelt in the minds of people in London for—shall I say, as I was going to say—a whole week. I really never remember any event producing so much apparent feeling. . . . For a clear and comprehensive view of the most complicated subject in all its relations; for the fairness of mind which disposes a man to follow out, and when overtaken to recognize, the truth; for magnanimity which made him ready to change his measures when he thought the good of the country required it, though he knew he should be charged with inconsistency on account of the change; for willingness to give a fair hearing to all that could be urged against his own opinions, and to listen to the suggestions of men whose understanding he knew to

be inferior to his own ; for personal purity, disinterestedness, integrity, and love of his country, I have never known his equal.' With such an eulogy from such a man we may leave Pitt to his rest.

Upon Pitt's death the King at once consented to accept Fox as a Minister ; and Grenville formed with him, Windham, Addington, Grey, Moira, Sheridan, and others, the Ministry which was known as that of All the Talents. It might better be called the Ministry of all the Blunders. Great things were most unreasonably expected of Fox. 'Many of his partisans,' we are told, 'anticipated a kind of Golden Age from his administration, but soon found out that matters went on very much after the old sort.' There was a riot in Westminster, which was suppressed by the Light Horse quite in the old fashion. Fox, it is true, was sick unto death ; but the Light Horse would equally have been called out if he had been in rude health. He made overtures for peace to Napoleon, and soon discovered that that great man was no such angel of light and moderation as his admirers conceived him to be. Within eight months of Pitt's death Fox died also ; and it must be confessed, I fear, that England got on all the better for their disappearance while the war lasted.

One of the first measures of the new Government was to frame a new system for the British military forces. Windham was Secretary of State for War, and rejoiced in the opportunity of carrying his favourite ideas into practice, namely, short service for the Regular Army with increased pay to soldiers upon re-engagement, and universal training for the rest of the country. The Duke of York was not friendly to short



service; Sir John Moore was decidedly opposed to it: and such officers as favoured it viewed it with affection of the Platonic kind. The King also was undoubtedly adverse to the change, and warned Windham of the danger of making radical alterations in the middle of a war. He gave way at once, however, when Ministers persisted; and Windham triumphantly embodied his reform in the Mutiny Act. He also passed an Act known as the Training Act, to subject the entire manhood of England to military instruction in batches of two hundred thousand at a time. This enactment has never, so far as I know, been repealed; and it seems therefore that, at this moment, Universal Military Service is the law of the land for England. In principle this was undoubtedly a great step forward. The elder Pitt's Militia Act of 1757 had purported to pass the entire nation through the ranks of the Militia; but this laudable object had been defeated by the admission of substitutes to serve in lieu of any man who could afford to provide one. The vicious system of substitution had proved the ruin of our military organization at large, and Windham had never ceased to declaim against it. The Training Act also struck a death-blow at another semi-military body, which Windham had likewise stigmatized as an accursed thing, namely, the Volunteers. ✓

The broad principles of these reforms were not difficult to explain, nor to defend; but the details, especially those that concerned the military training of the nation at large, were a very different question. In these practical and prosaic matters the new Minister for War was found wanting. 'Windham,' wrote Wilberforce, 'is a most wretched man of business—no pre-

cision or knowledge of details even in his own measures.' Such are too often the failings of a critic. Standing at a distance and surveying the finished building of others, he can perceive the weak points instantly, and possibly even suggest the means for repairing them. So, too, he can gaze at his own castles in the air with a lively eye to their symmetry and perfection; and even limn an imposing elevation of their fronts to all points of the compass. But when the time comes for translating the sketch into hard bricks and mortar, the tiresome details begin to obtrude themselves. This beautiful wall will not stand without buttresses; that stately tower is too heavy for its substructure; the rooms within are of magnificent proportions, but the only access to them is a narrow, unlighted passage; while, by an unfortunate oversight, all staircases have been forgotten. So easy is it to draw a house, so hard to build one. Far more formidable are the difficulties, infinitely greater the liability to omission and miscalculation, when a man is dealing not with honest bricks and mortar, but with the living perversity of flesh and blood.

Windham was not more successful with the direction of military operations than with that of military organization. After the defeat of Austerlitz and the withdrawal of Austria from the Coalition, Napoleon at once ordered his troops in Italy to enter Neapolitan territory, where they drove the Court of Naples in panic to Sicily, and would have seized that island itself had not a British General, with admirable foresight, occupied it before them. Meanwhile Austria, under the Treaty of Pressburg, had yielded Dalmatia to France, so that Napoleon seemed likely to become

all powerful in the Mediterranean. Russia, however, in spite of Austerlitz, continued to defy him ; and for the moment the friendship of Turkey became of the first importance to each of the contending parties. Napoleon sent an able and energetic envoy to Constantinople, and backed his diplomacy by assembling an army in Dalmatia ; while England, speaking by the mouth of Fox, had undertaken to support the influence of Russia with the Porte by the occupation, if necessary, of Egypt.

Windham's first idea, in these circumstances, was to fritter away the British force in the Mediterranean by sending little parties to capture and hold some of the ports on the Dalmatian coast. From these foolish and visionary ideas he was weaned by the good sense of General Craig, who had just returned from Sicily to England, and who pointed out that it would be much better to devote British resources to the security of Sicily itself. Windham therefore slightly reinforced the British in Sicily, both with troops and with ships ; and it chanced that there was now an opening for an effective diversion by a small British force in Italy. There was one fortress in Neapolitan territory, Gaeta, which still defied the French arms. Could the French be compelled to raise the siege, it was certain that the entire population of Calabria would rise, drive the French out, and threaten French security all over Italy. Unfortunately, both the General, Sir John Stuart, and the Admiral, Sir Sidney Smith, in Sicily were impostors who thought of nothing but their own importance. In July, 1806, they made their diversion in Calabria. Stuart, or rather Stuart's little army, defeated the French brilliantly at Maida, and captured



all the outlying garrisons in that province. With a little energy on the part of himself and Sidney Smith, Gaeta might have been saved; but each could think only of trying to steal the laurels of the other. Gaeta was thus sacrificed. The French, released from the siege, were able to advance again into Calabria, and Stuart, confronted by enormously superior forces, was fain to re-embark for Sicily.

The loss of this great opportunity in Italy, though ascribable immediately to the naval and military commanders, was ultimately due to Pitt's false military policy of 1805. Stuart had been unable to spare more than 5,000 men for his raid on Calabria. Had there been, as there should have been, 25,000 men under a competent general, the operations might have been continuous and effective. By December the British force in Sicily had risen to 19,000 men; but it was then too late for them to be of any service. Moreover, by the misconduct of another of Pitt's favourite officers, England had been entangled in unprofitable operations far over the sea.

In August, 1805, Sir David Baird and Sir Home Popham had been dispatched with a small army and squadron to capture the Cape of Good Hope. The conquest was easy; and Popham, who had long been under the spell of the Spanish adventurer, Miranda, persuaded Baird to give him a battalion for a buccaneering raid upon Rio de la Plata. He sailed thither accordingly with about 1,500 men under General Beresford, and by the mere surprise of his coming captured Buenos Ayres, a city of one hundred thousand inhabitants. Thereupon he sent home a circular to the British merchants in London, inviting them to take

advantage of the new market which he had opened for them. Within a few weeks the people of Buenos Ayres rose and captured the British force to a man; but meanwhile the news of Popham's success had reached England and aroused wild excitement and enthusiasm. Ministers, however, were seriously annoyed, especially Grenville, who detested Miranda; and Popham was summoned home to stand his trial by court-martial. But the pressure of the merchants was difficult to withstand. It was impossible to leave the original 1,500 men isolated in Rio de la Plata; and accordingly in September 3,000 men, under Sir Samuel Auchmuty, were dispatched thither with orders to maintain a permanent footing on the river. A month later an unexpected event in Europe encouraged Ministers to go further in the enterprise. After endless hesitation Prussia at last threw in her lot with the Coalition; and in October, 1806, eighteen months too late, declared war upon France. In a week she was utterly overthrown at Jena and Auerstädt, and within three weeks her army had ceased to exist. Russia was thus left alone on the Continent to continue the struggle against the French; and she had chosen this most inopportune moment to quarrel with the Turks. Altogether, affairs in Europe seemed so hopeless that, while not utterly abandoning their ally, the British Government resolved to seek new markets and a new sphere in the New World.

Windham now began to show himself in a fresh light as projector of operations; and his plan was a masterpiece of wild folly. Three thousand men had already been sent to Rio de la Plata on the east coast of South America. He now dispatched Robert Craufurd

with four thousand more to Chile on the west coast, with orders to open communications from Valparaiso with the force at Buenos Ayres, over nine hundred miles of country—say from Madrid to Amsterdam—and across the range of the Andes. This communication was to be maintained by a chain of posts, and if we allow two thousand men apiece to hold Valparaiso and Buenos Ayres (which would not be nearly enough), there remained three men to guard every mile of the intervening country.

Such an enterprise would make one think Windham a lunatic, did one not know him to be an extremely able and accomplished man. The truth is that this expedition to Chile was devised chiefly as a job to give Robert Craufurd an independent command. The complications to which this job gave rise were endless. Craufurd was the junior colonel of the whole army, and it was therefore necessary to choose regiments for his force, not because they were best fitted for service, but because their commanding officers were junior to him. Again, Windham sought to give him the allowance of a commander-in-chief, amounting to £3,400 a year; and this scandalous prodigality was only averted by the vigilance of Grenville. In December, 1806, Craufurd sailed for his destination; but immediately afterwards came news of the capture of Beresford's force and the recovery of Buenos Ayres by its inhabitants; whereupon orders were sent to Craufurd to sail direct to Rio de la Plata. The Berlin Decrees, whereby Napoleon declared the British Isles to be in a state of blockade and forbade all commerce with them, stimulated the British Government in its desire to gain new markets. In January it was re-



solved to dispatch yet a few more troops to ensure the capture of Buenos Ayres, and to send a new general to take command of the whole force in South America.

There followed a frightful struggle of job and counter-job. Windham wished to make either Sir John Stuart, just returned from Sicily, or Craufurd commander-in-chief. The Duke of York firmly and most rightly refused. Windham then tried to secure that Craufurd should be detached to his original destination in Chile as soon as Buenos Ayres had been recaptured. The military authorities vigorously opposed this, and Lord Grenville and Lord Howick (whom we have hitherto known as Grey) supported them. Windham tried to compromise by suggesting that Craufurd in Chile should remain under the orders of the General at Buenos Ayres. The Horse Guards retorted that this would be like placing an army in North Holland under the command of a General at Malta. Beaten at all points, Windham gave way. General Whitelocke was appointed commander-in-chief, apparently because he was the one man acceptable to all parties; and a junior member of the Government contrived to foist in a relation of his own name, Leveson-Gower, as second in command. Whitelocke sailed in February, with instructions so self-contradictory as to be impossible of fulfilment. He proved to be utterly incompetent, was repulsed with heavy loss at Buenos Ayres, and evacuated the country in July, 1807, under a convention. This last step was both wise and courageous, though it cost Whitelocke his commission; and it had the supreme merit of disentangling England from operations which would have bled her to death if continued much

longer. The expedition, however, returned to England in all the disgrace and humiliation of defeat.

Meanwhile Russia had held her own gallantly against Napoleon in Poland during the winter of 1806, but was calling urgently to England for assistance. Had the troops, which were sent on a fool's errand to South America, been dispatched to Sicily, they would have relieved Russia in two ways. Twenty thousand men descending upon Leghorn could have forced the French Army of Dalmatia to turn back for the defence of Italy. The same number, or even the ten thousand who were actually available at Messina, could have captured the forts on the Dardanelles, and enabled a British fleet to enforce the Sultan's compliance with the demands of Russia at Constantinople. Ministers as usual frittered away their force. They divided the fleet, sending half of it without any troops to the Dardanelles, and the other half with 5,000 men to occupy Alexandria, where they could do no good service whatever. The troops in Egypt, being unskilfully handled, suffered two or three severe reverses. The fleet sailed up the Dardanelles and down again, receiving much damage from the fire of the forts on the downward passage. Both returned with failure and dishonour. The whole strength of England in the Mediterranean was thus misapplied and wasted; and the Turks were strengthened in their bias towards France, and in their resistance to her enemies. Everywhere the military enterprises of the Ministry of All the Talents had been failures. They had imitated the worst faults of Pitt, and like him had covered the British arms with disgrace.

Before the full results of this mismanagement had

declared themselves the Ministry had resigned office, owing to a difference of opinion with the King concerning the admission of Roman Catholic officers to the Army and Navy. The immediate reason for their fall is, however, immaterial, for they would have infallibly have been driven from power in any case by popular indignation. A new Administration was formed, with the Duke of Portland for figure-head, and with the best followers of Pitt and Addington in the principal posts. Spencer Perceval took over the Exchequer, Lord Hawkesbury the Home Office, Canning the Foreign Office, and Castlereagh the War Office; and it is now time to say a word about each of these statesmen.

Spencer Perceval is a man whom historians, for some reason, have combined to belittle and to malign; and I suspect that he is known to the majority of Englishmen mainly through a few bitter and unfair sentences in Napier's *History of the Peninsular War*. He was three years younger than Pitt, but as a freshman of Trinity College, Cambridge, must have been a fellow undergraduate with the elder man. Having married early upon a very small income, he was obliged to devote himself steadfastly to his profession at the Bar, where he soon gained such reputation that he became known to Pitt, who in 1796 offered him the post of Chief Secretary for Ireland. Perceval refused the office; but, entering Parliament in the same year, distinguished himself by his boldness in standing up against Fox in debate. Thus it was that in 1798 Pitt designated him as his successor, because 'he appeared the most equal to cope with Mr. Fox'. He was a strenuous supporter of the war; and, holding strong



evangelical opinions, found good hope for the ultimate overthrow of Bonaparte in the predictions of the prophet Daniel. He accepted his first office under Addington in 1801, first as Solicitor, and shortly afterwards as Attorney-General; and he showed fearless chivalry in defending his chief against the attacks of even the most formidable critics. By this time he was so effective a debater that in 1804 Pitt again approached him, and succeeded in securing his services as Attorney-General, though only upon Perceval's own terms, namely, that Fox was not to be included in the Administration, and that he was not to be expected to support Catholic Emancipation. These reservations may seem to indicate a narrow mind; but it would be unjust to leap to any such conclusion. Other men of great weight shared Perceval's view that a Coalition is the weakest form of Administration; and the evidence of history certainly does not tell against them. On the subject of Catholic relief, again, Perceval, notwithstanding his evangelical prejudices, was by no means bigoted; but he held, as Pitt had held before him, that a great war was no time for important domestic reforms; and he was strengthened in his opinion at the moment by the uncompromising attitude of the King towards this question.

For the rest, Perceval was not only a remarkably able man, but in the highest degree honest, honourable, straightforward, and courageous. He was subject to error, as are other men; but there was no doubt as to his opinions. They might be right or they might be wrong; but he was not afraid to uphold them; and upon the main question—that Napoleon must be combated without flinching to the end—he was absolutely

inflexible. Extremely insignificant of stature, and of a pale cadaverous countenance, his physical defects made his fearless integrity command the greater admiration ; and a leading politician, who refused to take office under him, wrote none the less to a friend in 1810, ' We must fix this honest little fellow firmly in his seat, for it is a struggle of principle on the one hand against trimming and political intrigue on the other.' By 1812 his colleague Hawkesbury was able to write that Perceval had acquired an authority in the House of Commons beyond any Minister that he recollected, except Mr. Pitt.

In private life he was so blameless that his opponents quarrelled with him for his lack of vice ; and his self-control and sweetness of temper were as well marked in the heat of debate as in ordinary social intercourse. But this self-control did not exclude an almost quixotic generosity. When, for instance, it was proposed that Pitt's debts should be paid by subscription among his friends, it was the rich men who hung back, while Perceval, the father of an enormous family, at once offered £1,000. For all his virtues, there was nothing of the Pharisee about him, and no assumption of superiority. He could assert himself without being overweening ; he could be modest and self-effacing without extravagant humility ; while his wife and his numerous children, to all of whom he was devotedly attached, made political ambition comparatively a secondary consideration to him. Sydney Smith, with very questionable taste, made the legion of little Percevals more than once the subject of ridicule ; but it may be doubted whether a man is fitted to govern a great Empire unless he has at

any rate a wife, and preferably children also, of his own. 'Certainly the best works and of greatest merit for the public,' says Bacon, 'have proceeded from the unmarried or childless men, which both in affection and means have married and endowed the public.' It is bold to go against such an authority; but still I am inclined to do so, and to think that Pitt would have been a more useful man if he had married. He approached statesmanship somewhat in the Bohemian spirit, devoting to it every moment of his life, and allowing his pecuniary affairs to take care of themselves. The result was that he left £50,000 worth of debts to besmirch his memory, and never to the end of his life amended his ignorance of human nature.

✓ At the very opposite pole to Perceval stood his rival, George Canning. His father, the impecunious younger son of a respectable family, had married a beautiful but equally impecunious lady, and had died in 1771 on the first birthday of his little boy. His wife then went upon the stage and married an actor, a man apparently of no character, from whose care little George, when eight years old, was rescued by his uncle Stratford Canning, the father of the future Lord Stratford de Redclyffe. Thus it was that Canning was sent to Eton, where he is justly remembered as the centre of one of the most brilliant groups of boys ever seen in an English public school. The precocity of his literary talent manifested itself at once, and he maintained his reputation for scholarship when later he went up to Christ Church, by winning in 1789 the Chancellor's prize for Latin verse. In 1793 he joined himself to Pitt, whether by Pitt's invitation or as a voluntary recruit seems uncertain, entered Parliament in the



same year, and in 1796 became Under-Secretary at the Foreign Office, which post he held until 1799. His best political work during that period was done in the *Anti-Jacobin*, in concert with his Etonian friend, John Hookham Frere, and with George Ellis; and indeed it may be doubted whether Canning should ever have forsaken literature, for he was not well fitted to deal with men.

He was endowed, in fact, with the artistic temperament in one of its commonest and least attractive forms. His ability was exceptionally brilliant, no doubt, and his literary gifts, especially in the matter of witty and polished verse, such as are granted to few men; but his vanity and egoism were portentous. He did not lack courage, nor even public spirit of a certain kind; but he could think of nothing except in its relation to George Canning. There was in him an eternal restless craving to be always in the front, always conspicuous, always if possible in the first place; nor could this restless craving be stilled but by equally restless action. During Addington's Administration he could not resign himself to exclusion from office. His impatience found vent in witty epigrams, which are masterpieces in their ill-natured kind, against Addington and his followers, and in endless scheming, which was at length successful, for restoring Pitt, and, with Pitt, George Canning to office. He could not endure that any one should stand in his way; and when, through the death of Pitt, he ceased to be subordinate to an unapproachable chief and became himself a leader, his envy and jealousy got the better of him at once. It was a pity; for he was bold in council and vigorous in action; but it must be admitted that he

was a bad colleague. If his advice were not taken, he intrigued to get rid of those who opposed him, and would dilate, even to emissaries from foreign nations, upon the difference that would be seen if he directed British policy. Did anything go wrong, he hastened to disclaim responsibility, and to aver that such and such a misfortune would never have occurred had he been listened to. Pursuing this line of conduct, he was always for throwing the blame for mishaps upon subordinates, and was furious when his more loyal colleagues insisted that Ministers themselves must bear it. When bad news came, which might injure the Government, Canning became, from intense egoism, little less than hysterical; and while braver men were seeking to find a remedy, he continued to rave over the misfortune as personal to himself. Thus he was not only a bad colleague, but a bad master. He seems to have been genuinely unconscious of these failings. It never occurred to him that any man was of importance compared with George Canning. And this failing was heightened by his eloquence in Parliament and his readiness of speech at all times; for he had more than the usual contempt of the fluent man for the inarticulate. It is not wonderful, therefore, that he was generally distrusted; and rightly so, for his selfishness was more than enough to make him false. Yet he appears to have been supremely unaware of the fact; for in truth he could understand no man's ways but his own. Even in literature, while admiring Scott, he tried to make him write poetry like Dryden. The pleasantest side of the man must have been the irrepressible drollery which insisted upon asserting itself even in the driest and most prosaic business.

Canning could also be faithful, even to jobbery, to his own familiar friends. But the friends whom he treated as equals, such as Frere and George Ellis, were gifted with something of his own brilliancy, being men of talent rather than men of character; and it was Canning's greatest defect that he could not appreciate character.

Perceval's gifts as a scholar and debater no doubt redeemed him somewhat in Canning's eyes. Canning knew that he himself was a better scholar and a greater orator, and was content to ignore the rest. No such compensating qualities could he find in his greatest rival, Castlereagh. This nobleman, one year older than Canning himself, could show no pretty gifts, only strong, sterling, good qualities. Though during his short career at St. John's College, Cambridge, he had done himself credit, he had aspired to no University prizes. But he had devoted himself early to work for Ireland; he had, before he was thirty, found the courage, resolution, and resource to suppress the rebellion of 1798, when his superiors were helpless and wavering; and, when the danger was past, he had seconded Cornwallis, though in vain, in pleading for leniency towards the rebels at large. Castlereagh was no man of the tongue or of the pen. Occasionally he would produce a phrase of extreme felicity, but for the most part his speech and writings were clumsy, involved, and frequently even incorrect. But Castlereagh was one who made it his first business to ascertain facts, to look them squarely in the face, and to frame his measures to meet them. As a man of business he was admirable; methodical, industrious, conscientious, with a clear head and a singularly sane judgement.



No man was ever less governed by sentiment. He lived in stern times, and faced them with equal sternness, yet never for his personal aggrandisement, for his patriotism was as pure as that of Pitt himself. But though severely practical, Castlereagh was neither unkindly nor inhumane. Wilberforce was horrified to find that, though Castlereagh had studied the question of the slave-trade, he was against abolition. 'What a cold-blooded creature!' exclaimed the excellent William. Yet when Castlereagh took over the Office of War and Colonies, his prosaic enforcement of existing regulations did more to check the slave-trade than all the emotional utterances of the humane.<sup>1</sup>

✓ The action was typical of Castlereagh. He did what he thought right, without attention to the labels that might be affixed to his known opinions, made no parade, and claimed no credit. But his most signal qualities were his courage and his resolution. Had he been a soldier, he would have been one of those rare men who rise quickly to the top of their profession from sheer ignorance of the meaning of fear. Tall stature and a noble countenance endowed him with a magnificent presence, which, with a natural dignity of carriage, made even his clumsiest and wordiest speeches effective. In truth he was a great gentleman, courteous, honourable, and unselfish; and he was above all a man of strong character. Canning was not quite a gentleman, and was above all a man of brilliant talent. He was, therefore, quite incapable of appreciating what was great in Castlereagh; and Castlereagh, being such as he was, could hardly have helped perceiving the littleness in Canning. The two men were by nature anti-

<sup>1</sup> *Life of Wilberforce*, iii. 178, 234.

pathetic towards each other; and it is not surprising that they quarrelled. The reputation of Canning is the greater, unjustly as I think. It was Castlereagh, and not Canning, who tided us over the worst of the war.

And lastly we come to the obscure and forgotten Liverpool, forgotten although he was a Secretary of State from 1801 until 1806, again from 1807 till 1809, and Prime Minister from 1812 till 1827—in high and even supreme office, that is to say, throughout the most dangerous years of the war, and the possibly still more dangerous years at the opening of the times of peace. Could this have been a small man? Spencer Walpole, in his *History of England after the Peace*, would have us believe so; but for my part I find it incredible. Is it not that, as the son of his father—who was one of the King's friends and as such trusted with not the cleanest business of George the Third's personal government—Jenkinson, Hawkesbury, or Liverpool (for he was known by all three names) was likely to be obnoxious to Whig historians? He was educated at Charterhouse and Christ Church, where he struck up a warm friendship with his contemporary Canning; a friendship, however, which did not deter Canning from carrying on low intrigues against him at a critical time. He then went abroad, witnessed the storming of the Bastille, and in 1792 was for some time at Coblenz in the midst of the strange turmoil of Austrians, Prussians, and emigrated French nobles who were gathered round the head-quarters of the Duke of Brunswick. Hawkesbury entered Parliament through the influence of Sir James Lowther, the patron who had given Pitt his first seat in the House of Commons, and for the

same constituency of Appleby. In 1791 he made his maiden speech, which was pronounced by Pitt himself to have been the ablest maiden speech ever made in the House, and shortly afterwards Pitt gave him a place as Member of the India Board.

For some years afterwards Hawkesbury seems to have been subject to his father's influence rather than independent. In 1796 both father and son threatened to resign, but were conciliated by Pitt, the former by an earldom, the latter by the post of Master of the Mint. Both thenceforward supported Pitt in everything until the end of his first Administration, when Hawkesbury, with Pitt's approval, took over the Foreign Office under Addington, and negotiated, upon the terms proposed by Pitt, the Peace of Amiens. Under Pitt again he took over the Home Office in 1804, when the intrigues of Canning brought about a rupture, and Hawkesbury without hesitation resigned. There followed rather a curious scene. Pitt tried all his arts of persuasion to soften Hawkesbury, and even offered to turn Canning out of the Government. Hawkesbury remained obdurate, declaring that he wished no one to be removed upon his account; and it was only with difficulty that Pitt at last prevailed with him to retain his office. Meanwhile Canning had hurried to Hawkesbury's door, and, after being twice repulsed, forced himself upon his offended friend, when by abject apologies and by offers to resign he obtained forgiveness. He cannot have been quite a small man to whom Pitt and Canning thus humbled themselves, the more so as Pitt declared openly to Canning that if he must part either with him or with Hawkesbury, it should not be with Hawkesbury.



As Home Secretary, the control of the Militia and Volunteers, no sinecure when Napoleon's army was encamped at Boulogne, fell to Hawkesbury; and, considering the appalling blunders made by his predecessors in the organization of Home Defence, he administered the office remarkably well. He was in fact an excellent man of business, and, as he had held nearly every office in the Cabinet before he became Prime Minister, his knowledge of the affairs of the Empire was exceptionally thorough. We shall presently see that his sound common sense revealed to him the principal secret of success in war, and that he was a loyal and courageous master to the servants of the public. In private life he was blameless as Perceval, and a man of sincere piety. But the quality which seems to have kept him for so long at the head of affairs was his rare and unflinching tact. The reconciliation of Pitt and Addington was his work; and indeed his power of healing differences was such that he contrived to restore more or less decent relations between those extremely ill-conditioned people the Prince and Princess of Wales, without giving offence either to them or to the King. With such a nature it will be understood that he possessed great self-control, and was always scrupulously fair and moderate towards his opponents.

Such briefly were the new men who took over the government of England in 1807. I call them new because, though Perceval was but three years younger and the rest ten years younger than Pitt, they divorced themselves at once from Pitt's military policy, and initiated one of their own. The pith of that policy was that England should not content herself with paying

subsidies to foreign armies, but should possess a solid army of her own, and should throw its strength undivided upon a single point. Though not one of them approached Pitt in pre-eminence of ability, yet, taken together, they were more efficient than any combination of men which had been embattled by Pitt. Moreover, their very deficiencies tended to make them an efficient Ministry for War. Pitt saw the expediency of leaving domestic reforms alone until peace should come, but none the less could not keep his hands off them. The Ministries of Perceval and Hawkesbury resolutely declined to touch such questions, and resolved to stand or fall by their direction of the war. When hostilities were over their shortcomings began to stand revealed ; and then it was that the greatness of Pitt was most sorely needed to lift Ministers out of the groove into which war had compressed them. The greatest intellect among them, that of Canning, then showed its superiority by breaking away from their traditions. But we have to do with them only during the struggle against Napoleon ; and if we follow their career with a little attention we shall see, I think, that these men, who are now forgotten, ignored, and even despised, deserve a credit—even a fame—which has been far too long denied to them.

## LECTURE VI

THE legacy of mismanagement taken over by the Duke of Portland's Administration in March, 1807, did not reveal itself in all its fullness for some time after the new Cabinet had taken office. The crowning disaster in Egypt did not take place until April, nor that of Buenos Ayres until July; and in both cases the news took some months to reach England. But, quite apart from these details, the condition of the military forces was anything but satisfactory. Windham had practically abolished the Volunteers, but he had not begun training the entire nation to arms, as he had promised; so that there was, to all intent, no force for home defence except the Militia and the Regular Army. This necessarily signified that it would not be safe to send any great numbers of the Regulars abroad; and indeed Castlereagh judged that, after reserving a few thousand men to reinforce the troops in India and in South America in case of need, he could spare no more than eleven thousand for any service on the Continent of Europe. This was a deplorable state of things after the experience of fourteen years of nearly uninterrupted war; for nothing could be more certain than that, if Napoleon was to be overcome at all, it was on the Continent of Europe that he must be conquered. However, Castlereagh wisely decided that the efficiency of this handful of men would be doubled if it were all able to



move at once. He therefore bespoke transports which should be ready to carry the troops to any part of the world.

Then suddenly came such a succession of bad news as has rarely fallen upon any Ministry. First arrived the tidings of a disgraceful defeat of the British forces in Egypt; then that of the reverse to Admiral Duckworth's fleet in the Dardanelles; thirdly, that of a dangerous mutiny of a foreign regiment at Malta, which had indeed been quelled, but only at the cost of one of the principal forts, which the ringleaders had blown up over their own heads rather than surrender. Moreover, there had been the defeat of a Neapolitan expedition, undertaken expressly against the advice of the British General in Sicily, by the French in Calabria; and finally a mutiny of some Sepoy regiments at Vellore. This last, though happily suppressed by the amazing courage of a single British officer, betrayed the very disquieting fact that a mutiny of the entire native army had been in agitation, and indeed had only been averted by a premature outbreak on the part of certain regiments.

All these blows fell upon the Government during the month of May, while at the same time they were worried out of their lives by affairs on the Continent. In the south the Queen of Naples—a most pestilent woman—finding that the red-coats in Sicily did not restore her to her kingdom on the mainland of Italy, was working with all her powers of deceit against the British, and actually offering to betray Sicily into the hands of Napoleon. In the north a severe check inflicted in February upon Napoleon by the Russians at Eylau had, very naturally and rightly, brought

urgent appeals from the Tsar and the King of Prussia for help from England while there was yet time ; and the British General, Hutchinson, who was attached to the Russian head-quarters, pressed strongly for a British expedition to the Baltic. Castlereagh was obliged to confess that he could send but 12,000 men, and that for very shame he would not dispatch so unworthy a contingent to stand in line with a hundred thousand Russians and Prussians. But immediately afterwards, in the middle of April, a French force invaded Swedish Pomerania and invested Stralsund ; and it became evident that, unless aid were sent to the mad King of Sweden, this port, which was one of the very few that remained open to British commerce on the Continent, would shortly fall into French hands. After infinite trouble Gustavus was brought to an agreement for the defence of the place ; promising, in return for a liberal subsidy and for the assistance of some 8,000 men of the King's German Legion, to allow 16,000 of his own soldiers to defend his own territory. The troops of the Legion sailed at the end of June. Reinforcements were sent out to India in the course of the same month ; and, with the news that Napoleon on the 10th of June had again suffered something of a check at the hands of the Russians at Heilsborg, Ministers hoped for a little respite from calamity.

They were speedily undeceived. On the 14th of June the Russians were utterly overthrown at Friedland ; and on the 25th Napoleon and Alexander held their celebrated interview on the raft at Tilsit. A fortnight later the treaty was signed by which France and Russia made common cause against England.

Henceforth, not only the ports subject to French influence were to be shut upon her, but also those of the Adriatic and of Russia ; and, unless they dared to brave the joint wrath of Napoleon and Alexander, those of Denmark, Sweden, and Portugal as well.

This was the most perilous moment to which England was brought by external enemies during the entire war of the French Revolution and Empire. How the articles respecting Sweden, Denmark, and Portugal—which were secret—came to the knowledge of British Ministers is a mystery which perhaps will never be cleared up ; but come to their knowledge these stipulations did, and the Cabinet at once perceived the danger. If Denmark fell under the sway of France—and there seemed no means of averting it—then Napoleon would be able to use Danish ports for a base, and the very efficient Danish fleet, added to that of Russia, for the invasion of England. Nay, more than this, unless English Ministers acted promptly, Napoleon might overawe Denmark at once and compel her to cut off the retreat of the eight thousand of the King's German Legion now at Stralsund. Ministers took their resolution at once. The Treaty of Tilsit was signed on the 9th of July. On the 18th the Cabinet sent directions to the fleet in the Baltic to isolate the island of Zealand, on which stands the city of Copenhagen, and to the German troops at Stralsund to join that fleet at once. They then ordered 19,000 British troops to prepare for instant embarkation. Lastly, they turned a hapless diplomatic agent literally out of his bed with orders to go at once to Copenhagen, and call upon Denmark to yield up her fleet in pledge, or to see her dockyards and arsenals



destroyed. The object of the preparations was kept a profound secret. A strict embargo was laid upon the whole coast of Britain, so that no possible hint of the British intentions could get abroad. On the 29th of July the entire armament sailed; on the 3rd of August the fleet anchored off Elsinore; on the 7th and 8th the troops from England joined it; on the 14th, upon the failure of the negotiations, the operations were begun; on the 7th of September, Copenhagen, after a heavy bombardment, surrendered; and the Danish fleet passed into British hands.

This was well and courageously done; and all the more so because Ministers could not, from fear of betraying their agent, reveal the fact that they knew the contents of the secret articles. The proceeding, therefore, presented itself simply as a high-handed and cowardly attack upon a weaker state, and was accordingly branded as such alike by Liberals in England and by Napoleon's partisans abroad. Perhaps you remember the lines written concerning it by Thomas Campbell to a Danish man of letters in 1822:—

That attack, I allow, was a scandalous matter,  
 And I gave it my curse, and I wrote on't a satire.  
 To bepraise such an action of sin and of sorrow  
 I'll be damned if I would be the Laureate to-morrow.  
 There is not, take my word, a true Englishman glories  
 In that deed—'twas a deed of our merciless Tories,  
 Whom we hate, though they rule us; and I can assure ye  
 They had swung for it if England had sat as their  
 jury.

But a truce to remembrances blackened with pain,  
 Here's a health to yourself and your country, dear  
 Dane

. . . . .

May you leave us with something like love for our nation,

Though we're still cursed by Castlereagh's administration.

But whatever you think and wherever you ramble,  
Think there's one who has loved you in England, Tom Campbell.

There you have a specimen of the party feeling of the time, aggravated, it is true, by the Six Acts and other unpleasant incidents which had marked the return of England to peace, after war, continued for twenty-one years, had become a second nature. Thomas Campbell was not a greater fool than other men, but this was the description of trash which he wrote about things that he did not understand. On the other hand, it must be confessed that the position of Denmark, between hammer and anvil, was most cruel, and that only the law of self-preservation could justify our treatment of her. But that law is paramount; and swiftly though our Ministers acted, they were only just in time to anticipate Napoleon. On the 31st of July, just two days after the British expedition sailed, the Emperor informed the Danish Minister at Paris that, if England refused Russia's mediation in the war with France, Denmark must choose between war with England and war with the French Empire. There is little doubt that the Danish fleet would have been in French hands before the end of August if we had not laid violent hold upon it.

It is painful to add that, under the influence of Canning, the Cabinet very nearly marred this piece of good work by treachery and folly. Ministers had instructed the General and Admiral that possession

of the Danish fleet was the sole object of the expedition ; and accordingly the capitulation of Copenhagen had provided for the evacuation of that city within six weeks after the delivery of the ships. It occurred, however, to Canning that it would be of great advantage if we could hold the gate of the Baltic as a means of putting pressure upon Russia and French Germany, and barring the way to the egress of the Russian fleet. So undoubtedly it would have been, *if* we could have spared the men. But the occupation of Copenhagen would have meant the locking up of 30,000 troops amid a hostile population, in a position where the sea would not always have been open to them for retreat, and where it would have been absolutely impossible to prevent Napoleon from concentrating thrice their numbers against them. None the less, Canning was so intent upon retaining the place that the General was instructed to delay the evacuation upon any pretext, however flimsy. Lord Cathcart, however, was a strong man as well as an honourable one ; and declining to lend himself to tricks or folly of any kind, he defied the Government, embarked his troops in accordance with the capitulation, and brought them home. But for his firmness we should not have had a man to send for the help of Spain and Portugal in the Peninsula.

Meanwhile, however, Castlereagh had brought in a measure for augmenting the Regular Army by drawing nearly thirty thousand men from the Militia ; and for raising forty-four thousand new Militiamen, who should take the place of those thus swept into the front line, and should furnish a substantial number over and above them. The Acts passed to attain these ends



are the most drastic of their kind to be found upon the Statute-book, but they were necessary; and Ministers pressed them forward, despite their unpopularity, with unflinching courage. So it happened, that when a field presently opened itself for profitable employment of a small army on the Continent, such an army, for the first time since 1793, was forthcoming. In Pitt's time the practice had been never to have an army ready at the right moment, to raise one hastily and spasmodically when it was too late, and then to hurry the troops off on the first enterprise that might present itself.

† Castlereagh's preparations were made none too soon, for, albeit foiled in his hopes of gaining the Danish fleet, the French Emperor was steadily carrying out the policy of Tilsit. In July Napoleon collected an army under Marshal Junot at Bayonne; and in August he sent Portugal an ultimatum requiring her to sequester all British property within her dominions, to close her ports to England, and to declare war against that country. In October the Tsar sent a threatening letter to the King of Sweden and massed troops upon the frontier of Finland, which he had long yearned to take from Gustavus; and in November Russia formally declared war against England. It was now for the Cabinet to decide what should be done in respect of these two powers, both of them weak and helpless, yet old and faithful allies; for it was very obvious that England could hardly hope to save both.

Sweden was of the two the less profitable; and, humanly speaking, it was impossible that, even with England's help, she could hold her own against the joint forces of Russia, Denmark, and Napoleon, ~~More~~ partly because

over, King Gustavus, as we know, was mad; and the British Government had begun to realize that an alliance with a madman was an extremely troublesome and expensive thing, involving large subsidies and no return for them. Canning, therefore, wrote to Stockholm that, if Sweden held herself bound to the British alliance by feelings of honour only and not of interest, then England released her honourably from all obligations, and left her free to make the best terms that she could with her enemies. This was fairly but not wisely done, for it transferred the determination of British policy from a sane British Cabinet to a demented Swedish King. There was, as a matter of fact, ample room for Sweden to choose between surrender or resistance to the demands of Russia and her allies. Public opinion in Russia did not favour hostilities with Sweden, and Denmark had no wish to provide a base for a French army entering on a Swedish campaign. A patriotic and united nation under an able and trusted leader might, with England's assistance, have contended even against such an array of enemies as Russia, Denmark, and France conjoined, with some prospect of success. But the Swedes were weary of the misgovernment of a lunatic, and so far from looking to him as a chief that they were rather intent—and very pardonably so—upon deposing him. In his perversity Gustavus of course took up the line that was most embarrassing to England. Though absolutely incapable of organizing his people for war, or even of distinguishing between a real and an imaginary army, he resolved to defy the Tsar. England was in duty bound to support him, and was therefore committed to military operations in his favour. Further,

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by a treaty of February, 1808, she agreed to furnish to Gustavus a subsidy of £1,200,000, a sum which, together with the many hundred thousands already paid to him, might just as well have been thrown into the sea.

Meanwhile, under the more energetic impulse of Napoleon himself, affairs in Portugal had already come to a crisis. The Prince Regent, a weak but well-meaning man, on finding himself compelled at last to choose definitely between England and France, fell into a panic of irresolution. He had some excuse for his conduct, since, from long maladministration, his country was in no position to make any fight or take any part for herself. For a long time he wavered, and at last answered Napoleon that, sooner than yield to his demands, he would abandon his European possessions and retire to Brazil. His ambassador in London meanwhile signed a convention with England to the same effect.

This was exactly what the British Government wanted; for hardly credible though it appears to us at present, Ministers were thinking more seriously than ever of abandoning the struggle in Europe, and of seeking fresh markets in the New World to take the place of those that were closed to Britain by the Continental System in the Old. The news of the failure of Whitelocke at Buenos Ayres had not yet come; and their difficulties, as we shall see, increased so greatly towards the end of 1807 and the beginning of 1808 that, even after the troops had returned from Rio de la Plata, the project still commended itself to the Cabinet. Much was written, and indeed even undertaken, towards its ultimate fulfilment.



Unfortunately it was the tidings of this very defeat of Whitelocke which in October made the Regent of Portugal incline to throw in his lot with Napoleon. He delayed his departure for Brazil upon various pretexts; and thereupon the French Emperor and the British Foreign Minister vied with each other in threatening language to the unhappy man. Napoleon was bent on getting hold of Lisbon and, with Lisbon, of the Portuguese fleet, before the British should be able to spare troops from Copenhagen to prevent him. Canning was equally resolute that, if this same Portuguese fleet should not sail to Rio Janeiro, it should speedily find its way to Portsmouth under escort of a British squadron. Napoleon was the first to lose patience. He had already by secret conventions with Spain arranged for the passage of his troops through Spanish territory; and on the 17th of October he ordered Junot to cross the Bidassoa and march upon Lisbon. Junot marched accordingly on the 19th; and on the following day Napoleon declared war upon Portugal.

From that moment for four full weeks every preparation was made at Lisbon for hostilities with England; but on the 16th of November a British squadron arrived in the Tagus with a peremptory message from Canning to the Regent that, unless he embarked for Rio Janeiro forthwith and took his fleet with him, every one of his ships would be seized by force and held in pledge until the return of peace. The blockade of the Tagus proved that England was in earnest; and on the 28th the British ambassador placed himself at the Regent's elbow and never left the poor man until he had embarked and sailed out over

the bar. On the 29th the Portuguese fleet put to sea, but was still close to shore when, on the following day, Junot marched into Lisbon. Such had been the Marshal's haste, owing to Napoleon's orders, and so great the hardships of the march, that he had left nine-tenths of his army exhausted on the road. A bare fifteen hundred weary, half-armed men limped after him into the Portuguese capital, in time only to shake their fists at the vanishing sails on the horizon.

Thus by their energy and courage the British Ministers had removed the fleets both of Denmark and Portugal before Napoleon could lay hold of them and, so far as England was concerned, had taken the sting out of the Treaty of Tilsit. I do not think that we shall do wrong in ascribing much of the initial vigour and swiftness of these actions to Canning, who was above all things quick in imagination and resource; though doubtless Castlereagh, Perceval, Liverpool, and Chatham stood as one man behind him in stubborn resolution. In another sphere, however, Ministers allowed their energy to outstrip their wisdom. As if to bid special defiance to Napoleon's Continental System, underlined as it was by the Treaty of Tilsit, they issued an Order in Council on the 11th of November, declaring France and all her continental Allies to be in a state of blockade, and all vessels trading to them, except from British ports, to be lawful prize. Within a week Napoleon retaliated by a like decree in respect of British possessions; and thus the merchant shipping of all neutral powers was placed between the devil and the deep sea. The United States, in high irritation, forbade all commerce with either of the belligerent powers, which caused severe loss to themselves and to

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England while doing little harm to France; and the friction between the two Anglo-Saxon nations became at once so serious as actually to threaten war. It is strange that the British Ministers should have chosen such a moment to provoke the United States, for a contest with them would have marred their plans in the New World, plans which they were now pushing forward with greater zeal than ever. It is a curious fact that Arthur Wellesley's first commission from Castlereagh was to sketch projects of attack upon New Spain; yet such indeed is the truth. Happily, although Castlereagh had chosen the wrong field of operations, he had selected the right adviser.

The trouble with the United States was tided over for the present; and early in 1808 the eyes of the Cabinet were once more drawn to the Baltic. In February the Tsar at last invaded Finland; and the Swedes, helpless owing to the general disorganization which the rule of the mad king had brought about, looked anxiously for the coming of a British army. Gustavus, on the contrary, appears to have given up Finland at once for lost, and begged for British troops to help him to indemnify himself at the expense of Denmark. The British Ministers sent out a fleet immediately, but wisely stipulated that a plan of operations must be concerted before they could send an army. It so happened, however, that foul winds had delayed communication with Stockholm for weeks. Time was precious; the Swedish Minister in London was importunate; and the British Cabinet at last decided in April to send 12,000 troops to Gottenburg without any preliminary arrangement whatever. Who in particular was responsible for this step I have been



unable to discover ; but it was most fateful and most fatal. How enormously far-reaching its consequences were, directly and indirectly, you will now see ; and you will note concurrently for how much personal pique may count in the destiny of nations.

The General chosen to command the troops in Sweden was John Moore, the very best officer in the Army. Moore was a most remarkable man. He had distinguished himself first in America as a lad of eighteen ; and since the outbreak of the War of the Revolution he had been employed incessantly, never without earning distinction. In Corsica, in the West Indies, in North Holland, and in Egypt he had, though not in supreme command, done all the hardest of the work, and done it admirably ; and being an unlucky man as well as a very brave man, had rarely come out of action unwounded. But his military side was only one half of Moore. He was extremely well read and accomplished ; he had travelled not a little in time of peace on the Continent, and could speak French, German, and Italian ; and he had proved himself an admirable administrator. Lastly, he was a man of real insight and sound judgement in great affairs, a man whose essential good sense pierced at once to the heart of a matter and saw it as it was ; and with these qualities, added to great natural ability and a very wide experience of men in all parts of the world, it is not too much to say that he was one of the greatest Englishmen of his time. In the Army he was adored by all ranks, for though strict in discipline, he added to a singular personal charm the most careful attention to the welfare of all about him, perfect uprightness, and unaffected modesty. Among politicians he was not so

popular. Moore's defect was a readiness of intellectual contempt. He was merciless to impostors and, to use the modern word, to self-advertisers. He was not lenient to fools, even if they happened to be Ministers, nor to follies, even if they were measures of State. He thought ill of Pitt's military policy, and in political matters was accounted to be in opposition.

Recently he had been in Sicily, dry-nursing General Fox, an excellent but feeble old gentleman who had been jobbed into the Mediterranean Command as a compliment to his brother Charles James Fox. For years the British Government had kept a British garrison in Sicily, and had paid subsidies to the worthless King of Naples and his profligate, treacherous Queen to little or no purpose; but they were growing tired of it, for neither troops nor money could well be spared. The Cabinet consulted its Minister at Palermo, who, completely under the influence of the Queen, advised that Her Majesty's promises should be trusted and her policy supported. Ministers also consulted Moore, who answered that, unless the Queen were turned out, there could be neither peace nor safety nor any policy worth pursuing in Sicily. Moore was right; the diplomatist was wrong. The War Office, headed by Castlereagh, backed Moore; the Foreign Office, headed by Canning, of course upheld its own representative; and this, I cannot doubt, was the beginning of Canning's marked antipathy to Moore, and of his increased animosity against Castlereagh.

However, to return to Sweden, Sir John was sent out with instructions that his troops were to be kept strictly under the command of their own officers, and yet to defer to the wishes of the King of Sweden as

far as possible. Upon his arrival at Gottenburg he found that Gustavus had issued orders forbidding him to land, though Finland had been lost and the state of the country was desperate. He therefore repaired to Stockholm, where the King, not so lunatic as to be illogical, asked the meaning of his instructions. 'Before I allow foreign auxiliary troops to land in my country,' Gustavus said in effect, 'I wish to be clear whether they are under my command or not.' This was the very difficulty which Ministers had shirked in their instructions to Moore, not daring to place their troops under command of a madman in so many words, but hoping to shift the burden on to the General. Moore, on the contrary, wrote home for definite orders, and advised that the troops should be brought back to England at once. Ministers, greatly though most unreasonably annoyed, wrote Moore a mass of verbiage but not the definite directions for which he had asked. The General therefore went through the form of discussing operations with the mad King, the result being that Gustavus put him under arrest; whereupon Moore quietly slipped away and brought his troops straight back to England upon his own responsibility.

Ministers, or at any rate some of them headed by Canning, were furious with Sir John for his action, and determined to punish him. While Moore had been in Sweden, the whole tide of European events had turned; and the star of Napoleon, though the fact was of course still imperceptible, had begun to sink towards its setting. Taking advantage of a domestic quarrel in the Royal Family of Spain, the Emperor had treacherously flooded that country with troops, and then, constraining the King and Heir-apparent to



renounce their rights, had appointed his brother Joseph to be King of Spain in their stead. Before the whole of this scheme could be accomplished, the entire Spanish nation had risen in revolt, completely paralysing the French armies in the country, and had called upon England for help. Portugal likewise rose in insurrection; and Ministers, upon the advice of Arthur Wellesley, resolved to send a force to the coast of the Peninsula forthwith, in the hope if possible of defeating Junot's isolated army. Arthur Wellesley himself was placed in command of the small force at first sent out; but it was necessary to reinforce him, and the only troops to hand were those which had just been brought back by Moore from Sweden. If Moore went out with them to Portugal he, as senior officer, would have taken the command-in-chief out of Wellesley's hands; and Ministers were not going to allow this to happen at any cost. They had not the face to deprive him of the command of his own division, so they tried to disgust him into resigning it by putting not one but two new Generals over his head. Moore remonstrated with righteous indignation, but did not resign, and eventually sailed away to Portugal. You remember the result. Wellesley had completely defeated Junot at Vimiero, and was upon the point of pursuing the French army, with every prospect of forcing it to surrender, when one of the new Generals, Sir Harry Burrard, took the command out of his hands and stopped him. Within twenty-four hours a second new General, Sir Hew Dalrymple, took the command out of the hands of Burrard and confounded things completely. The result was that Junot and his army, instead of being shipped off to England as

prisoners, were comfortably embarked for France under the Convention of Cintra, with full liberty to fight again on another day.

The British nation went mad with rage, and Ministers were as mad as the worst of the people. Castlereagh, for once in his life, became almost hysterical, and Canning was so furious that he was for repudiating the Convention altogether. All cast about for a scapegoat; and at one moment there seemed every prospect that Wellesley would be selected. A Court of Inquiry was held, which pronounced that none of the three Generals was to blame, and that, when the chief command of an army changes hands three times in forty-eight hours, things must not be expected to go well. Ultimately, Sir Hew Dalrymple was chosen to bear the sins of Ministers, and the whole affair seemed to be ended. But it was not; for the Convention of Cintra was the original cause of the final breach between Canning and Castlereagh; Canning being desirous that all the Generals, including Wellesley, should be sacrificed. He drew, in fact, no distinction between Dalrymple and Wellesley, and was for throwing both of them overboard, with Burrard to boot, in order to save Ministers. Castlereagh, on the other hand, insisted that the Cabinet must bear its share of responsibility. The incident throws a curious light upon Canning. Twelve months afterwards, when the quarrel between the two Ministers had issued in a duel, Wellesley wrote to Castlereagh that he considered that Minister's championship of himself to have been due not to friendship but to a sense of what was just. But he added that the behaviour and language to him of Canning, whom

Wellesley had visited expressly to give his version of the history of the Convention, had been quite as kind as those of any other member of the Cabinet, and that Canning had uttered no word of disapprobation. Yet it is certain that in the Cabinet Canning condemned Wellesley's action in the matter. Can you wonder now that no one trusted Canning?

However, events in Europe marched on. Napoleon invaded Spain with a gigantic army, and the Spaniards appealed to England for help. Wellesley's army was still in Portugal, under Burrard's command; but Wellesley, being in disgrace, could not be placed at its head. There was only one man who could be, namely, Moore; and Ministers were reduced to the humiliating necessity of apologizing to Burrard for superseding him by Moore, though they had a few months ago expressly superseded Moore by Burrard. Fortunately, Burrard was not only a good soldier but a great gentleman, who admired Moore above all men, and joyfully made way for him. Castlereagh also wrote a letter to Moore in which he buried all unkindness, and Sir John answered him in the like honourable spirit. The General then received his orders to march his force into Spain to the assistance of the Spaniards, being instructed to concert operations with their commander-in-chief and to work in conjunction with their armies. You remember the result. There was no Spanish Commander-in-Chief; and long before Moore could reach them the Spanish armies had been scattered to the four winds. He was therefore left isolated in Northern Spain, wondering what he could do for that unhappy country. He thought that he could gain her some respite by threatening, with his



thirty thousand men, the communications of Napoleon, who had two hundred and fifty thousand. It was as if one dog were to snap at the hindmost of a pack of eight dogs as big as himself, so as to draw half of them upon him and yet not be caught. No operation could be more dangerous; but Moore accomplished it successfully. Napoleon at once sent half of his pack in pursuit of the British. Moore turned and beat the foremost at Coruña; and though he himself was killed, his army, less about one-sixth captured or left behind in the retreat, embarked safely for England.

Moore had performed a great and far-reaching service; but, after all, the British army had been driven out of Spain; and the British public, not knowing any better, was very indignant. Once again, Canning was for throwing all blame on the shoulders of the dead Moore; and once again Castlereagh refused to stoop to such meanness and cowardice, taking all responsibility upon himself. Canning behaved abominably. So far as he could, he tried still to attach all blame to Moore, and only yielded when Moore's friends insisted on vindicating the General by publishing his letters; when Canning, finding published facts too hard for him, gave way. Meanwhile, he appears to have removed the most important papers concerning the subject from the Foreign Office, for they are not now to be found among its archives. His difference with Castlereagh over this question of Moore's expedition widened the already wide breach between the two men.

The revolt of Spain against the rule of Napoleon heartened the rest of Europe to renewed resistance. Austria prepared once more to measure her strength against that of the French; and it was hoped that

Prussia would join in a great and final coalition. England, thanks to the measures of Castlereagh, would in a few months be able to spare seventy thousand men for active service; and the question arose where they should be employed. Arthur Wellesley was consulted as to the possibility of defending Portugal. He undertook, if the Portuguese military forces were re-established, to hold that country, or at any rate Lisbon, which was the essential point, with thirty thousand British troops. It remained to decide what should be done with the other forty thousand. The obvious thing seemed to be to send them also to the Peninsula, so as not merely to protect Lisbon but to take the offensive and drive the French over the Pyrenees. But against this was the insuperable difficulty that the men could not be paid nor their equipment for the campaign purchased. Owing to the suspension of cash payments in England, the paralysis of trade on the Continent, and the general uncertainty which drove people to hoard their coin, the dearth of specie, and in particular of silver, was appalling. In England itself the golden guinea could only be bought for twenty-five shillings; there was the greatest difficulty in finding small change for the payment of weekly wages; and the tradesmen even in petty towns issued tokens to their customers in change for paper. In Spain, in spite of the arrival of treasure-ships, the silver dollar rarely cost less than 4*s.* 10*d.* and rose as high as 6*s.* 9*d.*, while bills upon England were hardly negotiable. The same difficulty extending all over the Mediterranean forbade the dispatch of troops to Sicily; from which, in the event of war between Austria and France, a very efficient diversion might have been made in Austria's favour.

There remained the north of Europe. Here the Baltic was practically closed, owing to the loss of Stralsund, which we had in vain paid Gustavus of Sweden hundreds of thousands to preserve. But there was still the Weser, from which an attempt could be made, with the help of the population, to recover Hanover; and this was a quarter warmly favoured by the German patriots at large. For though the leaders of the patriotic party in Prussia hoped to persuade the King to draw the sword, they were fully resolved, if he did not, to begin the fight without him. In March, one Kleist—not the warrior-poet of that name, but a very different person—arrived in London with credentials from one of the chiefs of the insurrectionary organization, and proposed a magnificent scheme. The whole population between the Elbe and the Rhine was, according to his account, ready to rise. Sixty thousand men were ready to take up arms upon the first collision between France and Austria, and appealed to England for cannon, powder, and money. Six thousand British troops in Hanover would suffice to support a rising there; Napoleon's Westphalian army would join them in a body, as also would the Prussian army, whether the King decided for war or not; and so Germany would throw off the yoke of France for ever.

This Kleist was an impostor; but, looking to his credentials, Canning very excusably took him at his own valuation, and gave him some encouragement. And now began the curious intrigues which were destined finally to bring Canning and Castlereagh to blows. On the 24th of March Canning wrote to the Duke of Portland that the Government, as then constituted,



was unequal to the great task imposed upon it, and that unless this fault were amended he should resign. The time chosen for his threat was an odd one. It had just been decided that operations in the Peninsula should be continued under command of Arthur Wellesley, though the matter was not submitted for the King's sanction until two days later. On that actual day, the 24th, a Cabinet was held at which the Commander-in-Chief was asked if he could furnish a certain number of men for an expedition to the Scheldt, with the object of capturing the French fleet in that river. He declared himself unable to do so, and the project was dropped. It is unfortunately impossible to say whether it was before or after this Cabinet meeting that Canning wrote his letter; but two things are certain—first, that when he spoke of the Government as unequal to the task, he meant that Castlereagh was unfit to be at the War Office; and secondly, that on the very day after the Cabinet he invited Kleist to put his proposals into writing. This signified that though Canning approved of the operations in Portugal, he wished to employ the rest of the army in North Germany, and that above all he wished to direct the war in both places himself.

The Duke of Portland at once carried Canning's letter to the King, who, reading between the lines, suggested that Castlereagh should change office with some other member of the Administration. But the Duke, who was a weak man and in bad health, recommended that the change should be postponed until after the prorogation of Parliament, that Lord Wellesley should then take over the War Office, and that meanwhile not a word should be said to Castle-

reagh. With this Canning for the time professed contentment; but within less than a month he was grumbling that it was absurd to wait till the end of the session to get rid of Castlereagh. Why he was so anxious to oust his colleague from the War Office I never could understand, for Castlereagh was the best War Minister that we have ever had. His pretext was that Castlereagh had been tardy in dispatching the troops to the Peninsula, and that this was unjust to Wellesley; but such an excuse was nonsense. It is true that Canning had suddenly taken the Wellesleys to his heart; but Castlereagh could not forget how Canning had done his best to ruin the career of his own special nominee, Arthur Wellesley, over the Convention of Cintra. I can account for Canning's action only by remembering the intense egoism which led him to believe that no one could do anything right except himself, to despise a Minister who took responsibility for the failures as well as the successes of his agents, and to foresee that when the Duke of Portland resigned, which his failing health must compel him before long to do, Castlereagh might be a dangerous rival for the Prime Minister's place.

Meanwhile affairs in Europe strode on, Austria declared war a little prematurely; Germany rushed into partial insurrection likewise prematurely, and the great movement of which Kleist had boasted came to an abrupt end, Austria was at first unsuccessful in the war, and pressed England to make a diversion; but unless Prussia should take up arms with the Coalition, Ministers, as I think wisely, judged that any such operations must be unprofitable. Then matters improved. The Austrians on the 20th of May inflicted

upon Napoleon a serious defeat at Aspern, and the Emperor approached King Frederick William III with urgent appeals for the help of Prussia. But Frederick William was still as pusillanimous and irresolute as ever. Thrice already he had been brought by his advisers almost to the point of declaring war, and thrice he had shrunk back; and now he gave his final decision that he would not be moved from his neutrality. So deeply disgusted were the patriots, that their leaders resolved to force him into war by kindling, with the help of a British army, a general insurrection in North Germany; and two of them, no less men than Blücher and Gneisenau, threw up their commissions in the Prussian army so as to be free to go their own way.

But meanwhile the British army had been committed to operations elsewhere. Canning was strongly for sending it to North Germany in any event; and there is a great deal to be said in favour of his opinion. Indeed, if any other potentate but Frederick William had been in question, I do not doubt but that all his colleagues would have been of his mind; but Frederick William had failed England so often that one cannot blame them for distrusting him and all his works. It must be added, moreover, that the reports from the Weser, where the Austrians wished the British army to land, were extremely discouraging. The Cabinet, therefore, finally decided to devote all their strength to an operation so difficult and delicate that the slightest mishap must wreck it—a swift descent upon Antwerp, for the destruction of the dockyards and of the French fleet in the Scheldt.

This determination was taken on the 21st of June,



the very day of the prorogation of Parliament. Before evening the Duke of Portland sent for Perceval and told him that it was now impossible to oust Castlereagh, as had been agreed upon with Canning. Castlereagh had for weeks been toiling to make the forthcoming expedition to the Scheldt as perfect as possible ; he would be held responsible for the issue, and therefore he could not be removed from office. Perceval, who now for the first time learned of the underhand intrigue that had been going forward against Castlereagh, was perfectly horrified over the matter, and wrote to Canning to protest against further concealment. Canning answered curtly that the concealment was none of his making ; and he and Perceval then agreed to refer the matter to the Duke of Portland. Some correspondence passed, in the course of which Canning appears to have proposed some kind of compromise by which, in addition to the direction of foreign affairs, he should take over the control of the war in the Peninsula. Since Lord Wellesley was just taking over the British Embassy at Madrid, Henry Wellesley was about to be attached to the same embassy, and Arthur Wellesley was Commander-in-Chief in Spain, it should seem that Canning was intent upon binding himself to the fortunes of the family, or, as the matter probably presented itself to his own intelligence, of binding the Wellesleys for ever to himself. Perceval, however, upon general principles of administration, negatived this proposal most strongly. The man, he said, who directed military affairs in one quarter must direct them in all ; and he would hear of no other arrangement. Finally, it was agreed that things should remain as

they were, and that nothing should be said to Castlereagh. Perceval, as an honourable man, was most unhappy. 'This cursed business haunts me,' he said; but in deference to the Duke of Portland he very unwillingly endured it.

Meanwhile, good news had come in from Portugal that Sir Arthur Wellesley, by an audacious passage of the Douro, had driven the French under Soult with heavy loss out of that country; which, added to the intelligence of Aspern, encouraged better hopes for the future. At the end of July the great expedition sailed to the Scheldt, the army being under command of a general who was also a Cabinet Minister, Lord Chatham. Owing to his failure in this enterprise he has generally been set down as an incapable soldier; but this, I think, is contestable. Though known to be lazy, he was not ill-thought of in the service, and indeed had been designed to take the place of Moore in the first expedition to Portugal, if Sir John had resigned. But other motives were assigned, possibly with reason, for his appointment now. It is certain that Canning, though adverse to the expedition, was favourable to the choice of Chatham to direct it, and that he had expressed his willingness to retain office if Chatham should become Prime Minister. The old Duke of Wellington in later days, indeed, believed that Canning had worked to secure Chatham's nomination as head of the expedition, trusting that an easy triumph in the Low Countries would secure his succession to the Duke of Portland. The terms of Castlereagh's letter, in which he offers the command to Chatham, hardly bear out this theory, though they do not contradict it; but there can, I think, be no doubt that

throughout this time the thought of the coming retirement of the Duke of Portland exerted some influence upon every action of Canning.

At last, in August, happened the event for which Canning had been so long waiting. The Duke of Portland was struck down suddenly by a fit, and though he rallied for the moment, was obviously unable to continue at the head of the Government. At the time all was going well abroad. The Archduke Charles had, it is true, been defeated, though by no means routed, at Wagram on the 6th of July, and the victory had been followed by an armistice. But even so the situation did not seem hopeless. Wellesley, by the latest news, was advancing into Spain with every hope of entering Madrid ; and Chatham was besieging Flushing with the certainty of success. There seemed therefore to be no reason why the existing Ministry should not continue in power under a new chief ; and the opportunity might now be taken to transfer Castlereagh from the War Office to some other department. In this sense Perceval wrote to Canning. He was answered that the new chief must be one not only in name but in reality, and must be a member of the House of Commons. Canning added, with perfect frankness, that the choice lay between Perceval and himself, declaring, however, that he would not serve under Perceval and could not expect Perceval to serve under him. This came as a surprise to the Ministry at large, for they remembered that Canning had expressed his willingness to serve under Chatham. Perceval, after some hesitation, rejoined that he for his part could not serve under Canning, but regretted greatly that both could not serve under some third



person; and so matters remained until the beginning of September.

Then came tidings of misfortune after misfortune. Wellesley, after a desperate and successful fight at Talavera, had been compelled to retreat; Chatham had failed to reach Antwerp, and, with fully half of his army in hospital, had abandoned the enterprise on the Scheldt. Thereupon Canning wrote to the Duke of Portland that it was due to the country and to himself that Castlereagh should now be removed from the War Office and replaced by Lord Wellesley. The Duke in great agitation consulted Perceval, and replied that, if Castlereagh resigned, other members of the Cabinet would resign with him, but that, to make the redistribution of offices easy, he was prepared himself to resign at once. Canning answered that if the Duke resigned he would resign also, and called upon the Cabinet to decide the fate of Castlereagh, announcing that he himself considered his own resignation to be in the King's hands. Then at length Castlereagh heard of all that had been plotted against him, and resigned. The Duke of Portland likewise resigned; and Canning wrote to him that the easiest way out of the difficulty was for the Duke to devolve his office upon Perceval, though he himself could not undertake to serve under that Minister. Having done so he tried, as usual by underhand methods, to set Perceval aside and to secure the Premiership for himself. He met, however, with no success, and was presently made mindful of his original offence by receiving a challenge from Castlereagh. With a singularly bad taste Canning asked Henry Wellesley, who was at the moment in England, to be his second, but

was refused. The two statesmen met with pistols on the 22nd; and for a week Canning's political career was interrupted by a bullet through the thigh.

A duel between two Ministers naturally aroused great scandal, but the most important result to the country was that the Ministry had been broken up at a very critical moment. The Duke of Portland must bear a great share of the blame for this misfortune. No strong chief would have allowed a Minister to insist upon the removal of a colleague from a certain office without apprising the colleague of the fact; and it must be said for Canning that, though he connived at the concealment of his project for months, he had at the outset urged it with perfect openness. But, as I have said, Canning's original animus against Castlereagh as a War Minister remains always to be accounted for; and that after all is the main point. The operations for which Castlereagh was responsible as War Minister were six. First there was the expedition to Copenhagen, which beyond doubt was approved by Canning; though, as we have seen, he did his best to spoil it by the fatal idea of sealing up thirty thousand men in Denmark. Next, there was the dispatch of Sir John Moore to Sweden. This was folly, whoever was responsible for it; but it does not appear that Canning opposed it, and Canning was the man who most resented Moore's return, which was the one sensible feature in the whole transaction. Thirdly came the first expedition to Portugal, which would have gone well enough if Ministers had not laid themselves out to spite Moore; and nothing shall persuade me that Canning was not the moving spirit in that disgraceful transaction. After that followed, fourthly,

Moore's campaign in Spain, to which Canning was opposed. If this was because he realized that the Spanish armies were utterly useless, the fact would do him honour; but I do not think for one moment that he realized anything of the sort. His particular friend Frere, who was his Minister with the Spanish Government, certainly did not realize it, and indeed wrought his utmost to entangle Moore in operations which would have meant the destruction of the British troops in Spain. I am much more inclined to think that Canning, from personal animosity against Moore and from perhaps genuine but certainly mistaken mistrust of him, wished to keep that general as far as possible inactive. Fifthly, there was the second expedition sent out to Portugal, under Wellesley, which had gained one brilliant success, and had at least not been disgraced at Talavera. Finally, there was the Walcheren expedition, to which Canning had once more been opposed, and which certainly had been a costly and lamentable failure. Here Canning would have preferred a landing in the Weser. He had, indeed, with characteristic bad taste and bad faith imparted that fact to Gneisenau when he came to England, Castlereagh being then still at the War Office. But it is more than doubtful whether an expedition to North Germany would have resulted in any real success. Moreover, as we have seen, when Canning proposed to Perceval that he, at the Foreign Office, should take charge of one of the theatres of war, it was not Northern Europe that he selected, but the Iberian Peninsula.

What are we to deduce from all this? That Canning was prompted by patriotic motives in de-



vising to drive out Castlereagh? I do not think so for a moment. A really patriotic man would have attended to the business of his own department, would have forbidden British troops to be placed even conditionally under command of a sovereign who, as Canning if no other man in the Cabinet should have known, was a lunatic. He would also have taken to heart the sensible words of John Moore as to Sicily, and insisted, as his successor presently did insist, upon the removal of the Queen and the total reform of the Government. It is, I think, too evident that he wished to oust Castlereagh, first, because he was impatient of a Minister who took the blame for his faults as well as the credit for his successes; and secondly, because he wished to steal from his colleague the protection of those very successful brothers, the Wellesleys.

The resignation of Canning being followed by that of Lord Granville Leveson Gower, and preceded by those of the Duke of Portland and of Castlereagh, caused a gap of four places in the Ministry. The survivors, headed by Perceval, declared to the King that they could not form a new Government without help from the Opposition, and with his leave approached Lords Grey and Grenville. The overture was rejected by both; and it was decided that nothing could be done but to make Perceval Prime Minister, and give him a free hand to find allies wherever he could. Perceval turned to Lords Melville, Sidmouth, and Wellesley. The two first declined to join him, and Canning by some exceedingly sharp practice did his best to set Lord Wellesley also against Perceval. The new Prime Minister, however, heard what had happened in time to write a letter to Madrid, which

explained everything to Lord Wellesley, and prevailed with him to accept the Foreign Office. No other member of the Opposition would enter the Government, and Perceval was obliged to complete it as best he could. The Ministry as finally arranged included three future prime ministers, Liverpool, Palmerston, and Peel; yet it was not expected to last three months. As a matter of fact, it lasted practically for eighteen years. It carried England triumphantly through the five last years of the Great War; and it bore the brunt, whether it did well or ill, of a still more trying period, the first twelve years of peace. Yet I will be bold to say that there are few British Ministries of which we know so little. Why is this? Because, we are told, Wellington carried them through the war in spite of themselves; while, after peace came, they did all that they should not have done. With this latter dictum I shall not concern myself; but in my last lecture I hope to hold the balance between them and Wellington.

## LECTURE VII

I MUST recall to you first the circumstances in which Perceval took office in 1809. Perceval had failed in all attempts to gain help from any of the groups that stood outside his own little following; and the outlook at home and abroad was enough to daunt the boldest man. The Continental System was pressing very hard upon British commerce; Austria, after a gallant fight, had consented to a humiliating peace; all hope of a fresh coalition in Europe had been for the present blighted, and England was left to carry on the war alone. Her great expedition to the Scheldt had failed, with enormous cost to the country; and the army which had been sent out there was not only depleted by death, but absolutely crippled by epidemic disease. Lastly, the campaign in the Peninsula, after a brilliant opening, had ended in a bloody engagement and in the retreat of the British, leaving their wounded in the enemy's hands. The Spaniards had proved impossible people with whom to work; while, if left to themselves, they insisted upon squandering their armies in pitched battles, with the certain prospect and the invariable issue of disaster. Thus our only allies had turned out untrustworthy; and our only General had suffered in reputation. Everything, in fact, had gone wrong: the future seemed desperate.

Yet Spencer Perceval came forward to face all this, and the chance of impeachment into the bargain,



without flinching for one moment. In the House of Commons he was the only speaker of any eminence on the Treasury bench. All the greater men, such as Tierney, Whitbread, and Windham, were frankly against him; while Canning could not be trusted even to remain neutral. His ablest colleague, Liverpool, was in the House of Lords, so that Perceval stood absolutely alone; and his party was demoralized by the weak leadership of the Duke of Portland during the past twelve months. Why, you may ask, did he accept such a position? The answer seems to be that the only alternative would have been a Ministry under the headship of Lords Grenville and Grey, neither of whom could King George III abide. Sovereigns should of course have no such aversions; they should be ready to accept the most unpleasant of Ministers, even if they have a well-founded conviction that public affairs will go to ruin in such hands. Such is the theory of constitutional government; but Sovereigns after all are men and women—often uncommonly able men and women—and when they have sat long on the throne and worked hard, those who serve under them will make great sacrifices in order to render their later days easy. George the Third was just entering on the Jubilee year of his reign; and there was every probability that a long struggle with Grey and Grenville would unhinge his mind, and displace him in favour of the Prince of Wales who, as you know, did not enjoy, nor deserve to enjoy, a good reputation.

For the old King's peace of mind, therefore, Perceval threw himself into the breach; and sadly buffeted he was at first. In the first four weeks he was beaten four times in the House of Commons; the most

serious occasion being when the Opposition carried a motion for a Committee of Inquiry into the policy and conduct of the expedition to the Scheldt. This was a grave matter, for Chatham was still a member of the Government. The whole House, therefore, held its inquiry at enormous length, revealed all kinds of things which it was important that our enemies should not know, and finally acquitted the Government by a substantial majority. But upon a side issue a motion adverse to Lord Chatham was carried, and he was compelled to resign. Several more defeats upon various questions followed before the end of the session; but these were as nothing to the attacks of the Opposition upon the continuance of the war in the Peninsula. The spirit in which they treated the matter was shown first when the vote of thanks to Wellington for Talavera came before the House. Their criticisms are really incredible. Lord Milton declared that Sir Arthur Wellesley had fought Talavera merely to get a peerage. Think of that from the heir of a great and honoured house like the Fitzwilliams; and remember that it was an attack upon an absent man who, if a certain bullet had possessed a little greater velocity, would have been killed in the action. It is flat blackguardism. Another member (his name is not worth mentioning) averred that the battle had been swelled into a victory only by the influence of political connexion, to get Lord Wellington a step in the peerage. That is mere lowness of mind. Lord Grey maintained that the French had left the seventeen guns, captured by Wellington, upon the field as a matter of convenience to themselves. That is sheer imbecility. The war was condemned as hopeless and

quixotic by the same men, and by many others, such as Whitbread, Tierney, Ponsonby, and above all, from motives of professional jealousy, by General Tarleton. Against all these Perceval stood up valiantly; for he knew that his first business was the efficient prosecution of the war, and he had determined that the war could be most efficiently prosecuted in Portugal, and that under the command of Wellington.

And now let us pause for a moment to ask what manner of man was this Wellington in the year 1809. The best short summary of his character that I have ever read is that of Mr. Oman in the second volume of his great *History of the Peninsular War*, which you must read for yourselves; but I want to indulge myself in the luxury of supplementing this with a little sketch of my own. Arthur Wellesley, then, was the son of a musical, but poverty-stricken, Irish peer, who could write at least an excellent letter; and of a Hill, a daughter of the house of Downshire. Judging by her portrait it is pretty evident that her brilliant sons inherited from her their features; and judging by the lack of distinction in previous Wellesleys (always excepting John Wesley, the Methodist), it is hardly less certain that they derived from her their ability. Lord Mornington, the father, seems to have made a little orchestra of his boys; and thus it was that the small Arthur was brought up to play the violin, which accomplishment indeed he never dropped until he went to India, when he was nearly thirty years old, in 1798. Nor did he abandon it then from any dislike of music, but because he judged it unseemly, or perhaps ill-sounding, for a general to be a fiddler. You may remember that one of Napoleon's most accomplished



generals, Gouvion St. Cyr, used to solace himself, to the mighty disgust of his subordinate Marbot, with playing the violin in the quiet moments of a campaign. A general of later days, Sir Hope Grant, was a fine player on the violoncello. Wellington retained his love for music to the end. It was the one art, besides the art of war, with which he was in sympathy, and music is the most emotional of all the arts.

Placed in his youth in the Army, he was early attached to the staff of Lord Buckingham when Lord-Lieutenant in Ireland. He was then a silent, sheepish young man, and he retained his sheepish expression, as his portrait shows, even when he was a colonel of twenty-two or three. But Lord Buckingham was kind to him—helped him, so it is said, when in pecuniary difficulties—and Wellington never forgot it. Long afterwards, when he was the greatest man in Europe, he never failed to show peculiar graciousness to all young people who were descended from the Grenvilles, even though they did not bear that name.

His first service was as a colonel commanding a battalion in the operations of the Low Countries in the winter of 1794-5. That particular campaign, which was one incessant retreat, exemplified the lowest stage of demoralization to which a British force could descend. Men and officers were young, inexperienced, and undisciplined; the ordeal was high; the supreme moment of trial came during an Arctic frost; and the result was disaster. Wellington seems rarely to have spoken of those times, and only twice, so far as I know, is recorded to have referred to them. I am always devoured by curiosity to know how he conducted himself.

At the age of thirty he went out to India, chiefly, I fancy, in the hope of making some money under the protection of his elder brother, the Governor-General. He held a high though subordinate command under General Harris in the last attack upon Seringapatam in 1799; and during the siege there befell him the greatest mishap of his life. He projected and led a small attack at night upon a party of the enemy in a grove. Matters went wrong, as they often do in nocturnal fighting, for no reason whatever. His men ran away; unkind people said that he ran away too; and he came to make his report to General Harris in great agitation—the only instance that I know of his being really flustered. ‘Wellesley is mad with vexation,’ such is the entry which I read in a brother officer’s journal. The General was very far from pleased at the affair, but fortunately Arthur Wellesley was the brother of the Governor-General. He soon redeemed his character by the amazing energy and daring with which he put down dangerous bodies of wandering banditti in Southern India.

In 1803 he received the supreme command of the Southern Army in the great Mahratta War; and then suddenly at the age of thirty-four he blossomed out as a great general, statesman, and diplomatist. The truth is that India had wrought in him a remarkable physical change. Presumably the heat had quickened his circulation and ripened his powers of body and brain for the first time to their full maturity. He seized at once the essential points of the campaign and the essential characteristics of his enemy, and framed his plans to meet them. Everything was foreseen and forethought, and nothing forgotten. The audacity of

was he had  
before

his movements and attacks was startling; and his coolness, even in so desperate an action as Assaye, was miraculous. Still, he was not yet quite so much hardened as he became later; for on the evening of Assaye he sat down on the field of battle among the wounded and the dying, and remained motionless with his head dropped between his knees, overcome by the reaction after the strain of that awful day. But the military was only one side of his talent. After six weeks his insight into the Mahratta character was deeper and truer than that of the oldest resident in India; and the energy and sound sense with which he administered the government of a captured province earned for him a great reputation. One great mistake, indeed, he made; namely, when he organized relief-works to support the population during a famine in his province; and hugely disgusted he was when the people of all the adjacent provinces streamed in to share in the relief. But none the less, when in 1809 all British India was convulsed by a mutiny of the British officers in the Madras Army, his old colleagues wrote to him in Spain that only one thing could save India—his return as Governor-General and Commander-in-Chief.

After coming home from India in 1805 we find him a member of the House of Commons and Chief Secretary for Ireland, steering his way with icy intellectual contempt, as Mr. Oman says, amid the muddy shoals of Irish jobbery. The most pleasing feature in this part of his life was his attachment to his chief, the Duke of Richmond, who took the most lively interest in his Secretary's career, and received continual letters from his old subordinate when the



latter was in command in Spain. Wellesley was still Chief Secretary when he first went to Portugal in 1808, fought Roliça and Vimiero and nearly fell a victim to popular fury over the Convention of Cintra. He resigned, however, when he went out again in command in 1809. Since then he had forced the passage of the Douro, won the battle of Talavera, and narrowly escaped impending destruction by a retreat to Portugal with a starving army. He had learned, to use his own phrase, what fishing in Spanish troubled waters meant, and had resolved to fish in them no more.

But now once again his astonishing insight came into play. Spain was a hopeless ally owing to the impotence and folly of the Spanish Government; but Portugal could, he thought, be defended with no very large British force, if the Portuguese Army were set in order and paid by the British Government. He had said so before he started, and he wrote it again after Talavera, quite unshaken and undaunted by the discouraging experience through which he had just passed. He had taken the measure not only of the Spaniards, but of the French generals and the French armies, and indeed of Napoleon himself; and he had grasped with perfect comprehension the nature of the Peninsula as a fighting ground. When Wellesley went out to fight the Mahrattas, he knew that they lived on the country, that they carried no pontoons with them, and that they had a 'perfect genius for the selection of strong defensive positions'. Therefore he said, 'I will organize my food supplies, and the means of transporting them, perfectly; I will carry pontoons with me; and I will fight the enemy during the rainy season. If they take up defensive positions, I shall

wait until want of food compels them to move, and attack them when on the march. If they try to run away from me, I am sure to catch them, because they will be delayed by flooded rivers and I shall not. I shall be able to go where I please, when I please, and they will not; therefore in the long run I am bound to get the better of them.'

✕ So now he reasoned to himself:—'A British army in the Peninsula will act like a magnet to the French troops. They must drive it into the sea before they can hope to subdue Spain and Portugal. I will base myself upon Lisbon, where everything that I want can be brought to me by sea. The French, on the other hand, will have to bring everything overland and guard every mile of the road, for the whole population is against them. As they advance, I shall fall back, and the further they advance, the more soldiers they must leave behind. If they wish to fight me, I shall take up a strong defensive position and let them attack. My troops and my tactics are better than theirs, and I shall beat them. Before Lisbon I shall throw up works which, I think, they will not dare to assail. What then? They must do one of two things. They live on the country, and, when they have exhausted the district around them, they must go away. Even before then they will lose hundreds of men marauding, for starving soldiers will go marauding, and every isolated man will be killed or taken by the peasants. When they go away I shall follow them up, for, as in India, I shall organize my food-supplies and the means of moving them perfectly; and, though I shall not risk a general action, I shall worry and harass them and capture the laggards who,

having no food, will be many. This will send them back disheartened, discontented, and quarrelling among themselves, as is always the way in an unsuccessful army.

‘Or, if the French be intent on driving me from Portugal, they must concentrate a still larger force from their troops in Spain against me. Spain at present is like a roll of vellum, flattened out by the weight of small bodies of French troops. Remove some of these small bodies from their places and pile them together in one spot; and the space that they occupied rolls up again at once. Thus for every battalion that they move against me, they must lose their hold upon a part of Spain; and, even as it is, the Spanish guerrilla-bands are devouring their minor posts, patrols, detachments, and stragglers in small pieces every day. If by overwhelming force I am driven from Portugal, I have made all arrangements for embarking my army, and I shall take it round to Cadiz and play the same game there. They *must* concentrate troops to hold me in check, and so long as they *must* do that, they cannot proceed with the subjugation of the Peninsula. Even if they take Lisbon they must leave a strong force there, or we shall play the game of Roliça and Vimiero over again; and to be strong there they must weaken themselves elsewhere. If we stick to this Fabian policy we *must* win. It is only a question of patience for a time, and we *must* wear them down. Moreover, it is only a matter of time before Napoleon is embroiled, as he was this year, in Eastern Europe. Let him weaken his force in Spain, and we will drive him from the country. What is this Napoleon after all? A mighty



genius, no doubt, but a gambler. He has been playing double or quits for years, and one day the dice will fall quits. He is, on a magnificent scale, only a beggar on horseback; and like all beggars on horseback he will ride to the devil.'

How simple it all sounds after the event; but what profound insight into facts, what calm, cool, deliberate reasoning from those facts were needed to perceive it before the event! The great gift which Wellington possessed was the ability to see things instantly as they were; his great quality was that he never lost his hold upon facts, never evaded them, always faced them; his great virtue, that he always put duty before everything. His defects you will find well treated in Mr. Oman's summary aforesaid; but, after perusal of a part of his unprinted correspondence, I am disposed to think that his character was more complex and puzzling than is generally supposed. I shall consider only such characteristics as are important in their bearing upon his relations with Ministers, and even those very briefly.

We are accustomed to think of him as hard and frigid by nature. I question if this be a correct view. Unless I am mistaken, his was much rather a passionate and emotional temperament, kept under tremendous control. One has a sense of natural feelings compressed and crushed down in Wellington. Occasionally he let himself go in tempests of rage against individuals, which left his victim shattered and unnerved. These must have been more terrible even than Napoleon's outbursts; at least I cannot imagine that even a Talleyrand could have withstood them. But generally his wrath was kept within bounds, or

found vent only in biting sarcasm; and even his humour, of which he had a large share, was nearly always grim and often bitter. On the very rare occasions when his gentler feelings overcame him in spite of himself, the breakdown was, as might be expected, complete and overwhelming; but still this imperious self-command was no affectation. It seems to have been constitutional, and perhaps was fostered in his youth by his association as a sheepish boy with four lively brothers. Its origin is, I think, to be found in a deep sense of the littleness of the things of this world and of the people in it; and what Mr. Oman has very happily called his 'bleak frugality' was part and parcel of it. The Duke had a perfect genius for discomfort, as may be seen from a visit to his own private rooms, both at Apsley House and at Strathfieldsaye, which are almost the darkest, meanest, and coldest in either abode. He had an equal distaste for display. As a host he was, from self-respect, magnificent; but he never put on full uniform if he could avoid it, though as a private gentleman he was always so carefully dressed as to be called 'the beau'. Probably he was a great deal more proud of being an English gentleman than of being a Field-Marshal in most of the armies of Europe.

Being such a man he inspired confidence and admiration, but not love. He never, that I can discover, had a friend; he said once with emphasis that no woman ever loved him; and, though many women courted him with adoration, and were by no means rejected, it is probable that he spoke the truth. To children not his own he softened and was perfectly charming. He held his subordinates at a distance, and, the higher

he rose, the further he thrust them back. He was jealous to excess of his own authority, and would not suffer it to be questioned for a moment. He was tenacious, often again to excess, of his own opinions, and would rarely renounce them, though at times he would freely confess himself to have been wrong. Before Talavera he was warned by a British officer, of whom he had, not altogether unjustly, a low opinion, that the Spanish army was worthless. 'Tell him I shall be glad still to receive his reports,' he wrote after the battle; 'he gave me true information, but I did not believe him.' But though thus exacting towards his subordinates, he was very free and sometimes captious in his criticisms towards his superiors. In India he wrote very severely of some of the mistakes of his brother, the Governor-General. After the Convention of Cintra he actually tried to persuade Moore to displace Sir Hew Dalrymple and instal himself in his place, which, to call it by a crude name, was simply mutiny. He had something to say of the weakness of Government even when Canning and Castlereagh belonged to it; while of the Horse Guards under Sir David Dundas he was something more than impatient. It was vain, he wrote, to ask anything in this quarter for any one who deserved the King's favour; and, though not himself over-tender towards the feelings of others, he complained boldly to Castlereagh that the Horse Guards habitually treated men as 'stocks and stones'. Altogether, he was not the easiest of subordinates to manage, though fortunately he had the gift of inspiring superiors as well as inferiors with confidence.

Liverpool took over the War Office after Castlereagh's



resignation, and found in it of course Wellington's letters to Castlereagh. His first letter to the General, written just after the arrival of the bad news of peace between Austria and France, displayed an exceedingly intelligent and hopeful view of the contest in the Peninsula, and put some very sensible questions to Wellington upon the subject. The General answered, as was his wont, clearly and tersely, said that he should want 30,000 effective men to defend Portugal, and that to make up this number Government should send him out 3,000 at once. He did not conceal the fact that the campaign would probably bring no brilliant events, and that after all he might fail. 'I shall then be confoundedly abused,' he wrote, 'and in the end I may lose the little character I have gained; but I should not act fairly by the Government if I did not tell them that they will betray the honour and interests of the country if they do not continue their efforts in the Peninsula.' Meanwhile, he showed his letter to Mr. Villiers, our Minister at Lisbon, who was horrified at his binding himself to so small a number. 'The Government can now tie you down to 30,000 men,' he wrote; why did you not say 40,000?' The answer shows Wellington at his greatest. 'I am perfectly aware that 40,000 men are better than 30,000,' he wrote; 'but I know the Government's difficulties in the matter of reinforcing me. Would it be fair, or indeed honest, of me to call for a man more than I thought absolutely necessary for my purpose?' There spoke an ideal public servant; and Liverpool, though knowing nothing about this little incident, behaved like an ideal master. Wellington had asked him for 3,000 men, and he thereupon

promised to send out nearly 6,000 as soon as possible. The expense of keeping this army, and paying 30,000 Portuguese to boot, in the Peninsula was, he added, enormous, and he hoped that Wellington would see that England got her money's worth. He also complied instantly, so far as was within his power, with every request that Wellington made for officers, troops, and supplies.

This was satisfactory, so far as it went, but Wellington wanted more. Above all, he wanted a strong Government in command of him. 'I am convinced,' he wrote to Liverpool in March, 1810, 'that the Government cannot last'—(What a cheering opinion, by the way, to write to one of its members!)—and he hinted strongly that it would be well for Ministers to call in Lord Grenville. It is curious to see how strongly he felt upon this subject; and his words are worth remark as showing, what we at home do not realize, how our party-system hampers our generals in the field. 'I don't think,' he wrote to his brother William, 'that Government ought in fairness to make a man what they call Commander of the Forces, and place him in the position in which they have got me, without giving me in specific terms power or confidence, or without being certain of having a majority in Parliament to support him in case of accidents . . . for this reason I have pressed the strengthening of Government much against their inclinations.' The Great Duke had his bad and fractious moments, as we all have, though with far better excuse than most of us, and he relieved himself from time to time by a good grumble to his brother William. Perhaps it was hardly fair to print such letters; but there they are,

and like most grumbling letters, they are unjust. 'I have pressed the strengthening of Government much against their inclination!' Why! the unfortunate Government had never ceased to endeavour to strengthen itself. At the beginning of 1810 it made overtures to Canning, who in spite of all that he had said before, was now ready to serve under Perceval alone, but would not come in with Sidmouth or Castlereagh. These last two were also approached in the autumn of the same year, and invited to come in with Canning. Liverpool and Wellesley offered to vacate the War Office and Foreign Office to make way for them; and, when the rest of the Cabinet protested, Yorke and Ryder volunteered to give up to them the Admiralty and the Home Office. This instance of self-sacrifice shows that Ministers did their best to reunite all of Pitt's friends in a solid body; but their efforts were useless. Canning, Castlereagh, and Sidmouth all declined to come in.

Wellington's further complaints were that the Government did not furnish him, as it ought, either with specie or with reinforcements. His troubles owing to lack of specie were sufficiently serious to warrant complaint, but those of the Government were more serious still. Wellington urged that there was a constant importation of specie from England into Lisbon, and that, if private traders could get hold of the article, Government ought to be able to get hold of it too. Ministers, on the other hand, replied that the Bank of England could only with the greatest difficulty procure enough for its own needs; and Huskisson, who had the reputation of knowing more about finance than any other man, wrote with some



temper, 'How can you expect us to buy specie here with the exchange 30 per cent. against us, and guineas selling at 25*s.*?' Wellington, however, was not satisfied; and he wrote to his more trusted subordinates that Ministers had undertaken a bigger job than they could manage. The Government never lost an opportunity of endeavouring to diminish this dearth of specie, but the evil continued throughout the war, until both Wellington and his troops accepted the fact that all payments must needs be six months in arrear.

Another occasional grievance to Wellington was the question of reinforcements, as to which his complaints were sometimes in private somewhat bitter. Yet Ministers did their utmost to meet his demands in every possible way. At the outset he asked them for 3,000 men, to which they responded by sending him 5,000; and they would have sent him more had not the Spanish Government begged them for a garrison for Cadiz, which distracted some 6,000 men to that point. Late in the summer of 1810, when Massena crossed the Portuguese frontier and advanced upon the capital, Wellington pressed for yet more troops to tide him over the decisive battle that must be fought for Lisbon; but here Ministers could not help him. The bulk of the army at home was still disabled by Walcheren fever, and the condition of Ireland was so serious—far more serious, as Wellington himself acknowledged, than that of Portugal—that they could spare no more men. They ordered every battalion that could be drawn from foreign service in America or the Mediterranean to Lisbon, but they could not do more. If they could have provided the men they

could not have afforded to pay them, for the loss on exchange alone cost England a million annually. So keenly did Wellington feel this refusal, that for once he forgot the difficulties of the Government at home, and wrote a querulous letter, bewailing the irksomeness of the waiting game which he had himself recommended ; and he added that, from all appearances and from all reports, Ministers had no confidence in the operations which they were undertaking.

Do not imagine that I mention this with the idea of belittling a great man. The load of work and responsibility upon his shoulders was enormous ; and the merest suspicion that he might be carrying it for the sake of masters who did not trust him was enough to gall him to the quick. Moreover, it seems to be a fact that, when Perceval first found leisure to go into the accounts of the nation, he was so much dismayed by the country's financial embarrassments that for a moment he thought the continuance of the war in the Peninsula to be hopeless. He was soon persuaded to the contrary, and carried motions in the Commons for larger expenditure than before ; but it is quite possible that some hint of his misgivings may have reached Wellington. It is also certain that Lord Wellesley never ceased to press the Cabinet to increase Wellington's army very greatly. In fact he was so much incensed at his failure to persuade his colleagues to enlarge enormously the scale of operations and expenditure, that he ceased to attend the meetings of the Cabinet. Whispers, if not full reports, of these events must also have reached Wellington, probably not unadorned by peevish comments from Lord Wellesley, who was inclined to carry the manners of a viceroy (and an

exceedingly overbearing viceroy) into the Cabinet. It seems indeed that he was anxious to assume the direction of finance, as well as of foreign affairs, which Perceval, who was a very resolute little man, most rightly declined to permit. There can be little doubt, I think, but that Lord Wellesley, either directly or by injudicious hints to others, was primarily responsible for Wellington's momentary distrust of his employers.

But, apart from this, Wellington had justifiable cause for anxiety. The Government's majority in the Commons was very uncertain, and the Opposition not only formidable, but absolutely unscrupulous and completely blinded by faction. They wanted the Peninsular War to fail, simply because their political adversaries were prosecuting it; and they strove at all costs to prove that it was a failure. They gathered their opinions from the letters of grumbling officers and men, who were far too numerous in the army, and their facts—you will hardly believe it—from the *Moniteur*,—the *Moniteur* which was inspired not only by England's bitterest enemy, but by a man of mendacity so prodigious that, if the paternity of lies at large had not already through long ages been assigned to another character, he might worthily have come forward to claim it. Naturally the friends of Government were nervous, and vented their nervousness in little hints about the importance of this movement or that in military operations. Naturally, too, Liverpool repeated the hints to Wellington, though not with any idea of binding him to any operation of which he did not approve; for the War Minister expressly gave the General full discretion to do what he thought right, and assured him of his support. But these little sug-



gestions assumed quite another aspect in Wellington's mind. Officers returning from leave, perhaps after much gossip with members of the Opposition, told him on arrival at Lisbon that they had expected to find the army re-embarking, and indeed that this opinion had been shared by Ministers themselves. Wellington ought not perhaps to have lent such ready credence to these reports ; but he was a sorely harassed man, and he knew something of the ways of Ministers at large. He jumped to the conclusion that his employers contemplated throwing him over, and that the various hints written to him in private letters were designed, in case of his failure, simply to cover their own retreat, by proving that they had recommended to him certain measures which, if adopted by him, might have saved the situation. It was in this mood, under the circumstances a very excusable mood, that he wrote his querulous letter aforesaid.

Both Perceval and Liverpool answered Wellington with admirable temper and straightforwardness. Perceval frankly admitted that, had he not been misled by incorrect estimates as to the cost of the war, he would never have dared to incur such expenditure as it was now found to entail. But he added that he was glad that he had been so misled, for he now believed that the expense was necessary and unavoidable, and hoped to meet it. 'Still,' he said, 'if you have thought that this country can make and continue to make greater exertions than it is now making, it is material that you should be undeceived.' Liverpool entered of course more deeply into the substance of Wellington's complaints, but was equally firm. 'Our utterances in Parliament,' he said in effect, 'will show

what our public sentiments are as to perseverance in the war in Portugal. Our sanguineness for its success has indeed brought upon us the remonstrances of friends as well as the censure of enemies. In private there is no subject upon which we are so unanimous as the expediency of continuing it; and I can tell you that, but for our determination to persist in it at all risks to ourselves, the House of Commons would have withdrawn your army six months ago. Croaking officers who came home from it were the cause of this despondency, though many of them have changed their opinions now and find it convenient to palm them off on Ministers. As regards your own reputation, it has gained rather than lost by your playing Fabius, and never stood so high as at the present moment. Finally, we are sending you fourteen thousand men, which will augment your force to near forty thousand, instead of the thirty thousand which we undertook to give you. But understand plainly that we cannot engage to maintain it at this strength. We cannot find the men, and we cannot find the specie. We must choose between steady exertion on a moderate scale for a long contest, or a single great effort; and, after the experience of the last fifteen years, we prefer the steady exertion.'

It is in this last sentence that is seen the difference between Lord Wellesley on the one side, and Perceval and Liverpool on the other. Pitt's military policy had always been one of huge spasmodic struggles, followed by years of weakness and collapse. Hence there was no definite organization for raising men, training them into an army, holding it ready to cross the sea at a moment's notice, and providing for the repletion of

the gaps made by active service. Castlereagh had done much by turning the Militia into a recruiting dépôt for the Army, and keeping transports (of course, at vast expense) always ready to carry them overseas. But he was too good a pupil of Pitt to abstain from spasmodic effort, and the result had been the disastrous expedition to Walcheren. Wellesley, full of confidence, and just confidence, in his brother, was eager to fall into a like blunder; though he wished (and here all of his colleagues were with him) to concentrate all strength upon a single point. Perceval was equally a disciple of Pitt, but—whether of himself, or by Liverpool's help, I do not know—he abjured spasmodic effort in favour of sustained exertion, preferring not to anticipate the next year's supplies of men and money for a great stroke, which, if it failed, would leave him manless and penniless for two years.

In fact, Castlereagh, Liverpool, and Perceval contributed more than any three civilians to the downfall of Napoleon; Castlereagh by renewing operations in the Peninsula, and above all by reappointing Wellington to the command; Perceval and Liverpool by husbanding the strength of England for a long, dogged, and persistent struggle.

In spite of all his harsh criticism of Ministers, Wellington, when the hour of trial came, found himself with plenty of troops for his purpose. He beat Massena heavily at Bussaco, and indeed would have stopped his progress then and there but for an unfortunate mistake of a Portuguese General. But he was prepared for any such emergency, and falling back to the lines which he had fortified at Torres Vedras, brought Massena absolutely to a standstill. The French



Marshal lingered before the lines for months, but in vain; and at last he beat a retreat, having expended a whole campaigning season and several thousand men for no purpose whatever. The victory of Bussaco brought credit to the Government, as it deserved; and the release of the transports, which had been kept at great expense in the Tagus in case Wellington should have been driven out of the Peninsula, saved a large sum of money.

But almost immediately the hapless Ministers were thrown into fresh difficulties by the relapse of the King into insanity, and the need for appointing a Regent. No one doubted but that they would be driven from office as soon as the Prince of Wales should take his father's place. 'By God they shall not remain an hour,' had been the elegant words of the Prince himself, who, following the evil fashion of those times, had as heir-apparent always thrown in his lot against the King's Government. As if to defy the elements, Perceval determined to follow Pitt's precedent of 1788, and to limit the Regent's powers for a time by Act of Parliament. Wellington, far away in Portugal, condemned such a course by anticipation as tending to democratize the Prince's government. He considered that it would not succeed, and prophesied that the Ministry could not last, in which case he should probably resign his command. Perceval, however, carried his bill triumphantly with little alteration, and emerged from the struggle with marvellous increase of prestige and of influence. Men thought him the greatest Minister since Pitt, lacking indeed his master's commanding personality and his eloquence, but little behind him in weight with the House of Commons, and fully his equal in courage and integrity.

Hence, to the general surprise, he was not driven from office. The King, after several promises of returning sanity, settled down to grow steadily worse ; but none the less the Regent accepted Perceval as his Minister. All through the Session his influence in the Commons grew steadily, and, in spite of an acute commercial crisis, he carried a Budget for largely increased expenditure, actually doubling the allowance hitherto granted for the pay of the Portuguese troops. The Opposition of course condemned the whole proceeding, and proved entirely to their own satisfaction that France could not be checked in the Peninsula by continuance of war in Portugal. It can hardly, I think, be doubted that, if the Regent had displaced Perceval to make room for them, they would have embarked the Peninsular army and brought it home. The fear of this catastrophe eternally haunted Wellington, and one can think of no more hideous and discouraging spectre to a Commander-in-Chief in the field. He was just bringing both his own and the Portuguese troops with infinite difficulty into good train. He had fought hard with recalcitrant members of the Portuguese Regency to increase the efficiency of the administration ; he had committed himself in all directions, as a commander-in-chief in a strange country must commit himself, to obtain the requisite supplies for a campaign ; and he had actually carried success so far that he had forced the French to evacuate Portugal. Yet at any moment the order might come for him to retreat and to re-embark, to repudiate all the engagements that he had formed, to abandon all who had made sacrifices for him, and to allow the beaten French to re-enter Portugal trium-

phant. And this he might be called upon to do, not because it was right or necessary, or even expedient, but simply because a parcel of prejudiced, ignorant men had chosen while in Opposition to condemn measures which they did not understand; so that if called to office, they could not have stultified themselves by admitting that after all those measures were sound. We in England love nothing so well as to criticize, in our newspapers and our talking assemblies, the current actions of the Governments of the world and of their officers, civil and military, in all quarters of the globe. Nor do we stop at criticism, for we do not hesitate to pass judgement in uncompromising terms. If we know the whole truth, we have a right to do so; but how often do we know the whole truth? How often do we know even one-tenth of the truth? And believe me there is nothing so difficult to ascertain, or to apprehend when ascertained, as the truth about current military operations. Yet there is no subject upon which hasty judgement is so ready, and shallow criticism is so voluble. Tierney, Grey, and Ponsonby were not fools; but they indulged themselves in this particular folly to an excess which might have been fatal to their country.

As things were, their recklessness brought about the slaughter of many hundred men; for, knowing how critical was the state of things at home, Wellington resolved to risk a pitched battle, which in more favourable circumstances he would have declined. Fortune was not unkind to him, and he was able to claim the fight as a successful one, though, as he wrote himself, 'if Boney had been there we should have been beat.' This was the action of Fuentes de Oñoro. But here



remark the nerve of the man in offering battle to a general who by some was reckoned to be Napoleon's equal, and his insight in perceiving that no ability in the subordinate could make him so formidable as his great master. Contrast with it, too, the nervelessness of Beresford—as brave a man as ever stepped—who not many days later was almost paralysed by finding himself face to face with a French marshal at Albuera, and would have proclaimed himself defeated if Wellington had not hastily intervened to declare him victorious. Indeed, all three of the general actions of 1811—Graham's at Barrosa was the third—were hazardous in the extreme, and were won by sheer hard fighting. But the British, as one of the ablest of the French generals, Foy, confessed, were better troops than their adversaries.

These victories strengthened the hands of Government; but in January, 1812, Lord Wellesley resigned, and Perceval found himself again in difficulties. At first he thought of resigning himself, but was dissuaded from doing so; and the Regent after making overtures, which were scornfully rejected, to Lords Grey and Grenville, decided not to change his Ministers. Castlereagh was persuaded to accept the Foreign Office in succession to Wellesley, which was a great gain to the Administration; and Perceval was going forward with renewed strength and confidence when on the 11th of May he was shot dead by a madman, in the House of Commons. But for this untimely end he would unquestionably have held the Prime Minister's place instead of Liverpool until 1827, and his name would have been remembered at least as well as Liverpool's and Castlereagh's. It may be

questioned, however, whether he would have varied their policy of repression after the Peace, and his body might very likely have been hissed into the Abbey as was Castlereagh's in 1822. But, as things were, Perceval had tided the country over two of the three worst years of the war, and it is wrong that such good service should be forgotten.

Napier, in his history, has written that Perceval had neither the wisdom to support nor the manliness to put an end to the war in the Peninsula. 'His crooked, contemptible policy was shown by withholding what was necessary for the contest, and throwing on the General the responsibility of failure.' Napier, as Mr. Oman frequently but not too often reminds us, is never to be trusted in his utterances respecting British Ministers of that time. In the first place he was a frantic partisan, violently opposed to the governments of Perceval and Liverpool, and therefore quite incompetent to form a judgement upon the facts, even if he had been acquainted with them. In the second place, he was, like many radicals of the time, so fervent an admirer of Napoleon the autocrat, that uncompromising hostility, such as that of Perceval, to his idol was to his mind as blasphemy against the Holy Ghost. What was really the Ministry's great crime in Napier's eyes? Simply that Perceval, with his puny frame, cadaverous face, and large family (all of which, like Pitt's chastity, were accounted as crimes by his opponents) had smitten hip and thigh the Whitbreads, the Tierneys, the Lord Miltons, the Creeveys, and the remainder of Napier's allies in the House of Commons, and had kept them out of office. It was only by keeping them out of office

that Wellington's army was maintained in the Peninsula at all; and this forsooth was no service whatever! Perceval was indeed firm that Wellington should continue his waiting game, instead of breaking out into premature efforts which could not have been maintained; and here, as I think, he was right. So long as Napoleon could dominate Europe by his alliance with Russia, and could keep the greater part of his army in the Peninsula, England must proceed with patience. But as soon as Napoleon should break with Alexander—and Liverpool, not without reason, wrote hopefully of such an event early in 1811—then great part of his army must be withdrawn to Russia, and the end of the waiting game would begin. It is somewhat curious that one of Perceval's last acts was to reject uncompromisingly an overture from Napoleon for the negotiation of peace; and that he was assassinated just two days after Napoleon started to take command of the army for the invasion of Russia. The dawn had begun to break; but the Minister who had toiled through the many hours of darkness was not destined to see the day. History is full of such tragedies as this.

Upon the death of Perceval, Liverpool succeeded him as First Lord of the Treasury; and, since Wellesley and Canning were thought to have stood aloof chiefly from unwillingness to serve under Perceval, Liverpool now endeavoured to bring them into the Administration. His overtures were rejected; and very soon an adverse division in the House of Commons, accidental rather than genuine, drove Liverpool himself to resign. The Regent called upon Lord Wellesley to form a Government; and Wellesley, seeking out Canning, tried to



construct a Ministry of all the Talents by inviting not only Lords Grey and Grenville but even Liverpool and the most prominent of his colleagues to join him. Grey and Grenville declined the offer because they differed with Wellesley as to military policy in Spain. Liverpool equally declined because Wellesley had allowed an attack upon Perceval to be published in the newspapers. The Regent then turned to Lord Moira, who, however, failed to gain Grey and Wellesley. Thus, within less than a month of Perceval's death Liverpool became again Prime Minister ; and in a few weeks his Government was firmly established in power. This was as it should be, for he and no other was the right man for the post. He made yet another very earnest effort to gain over Canning, to whom Castlereagh, with noble self-denial, offered freely to yield the Foreign Office ; but the negotiation broke down, and it was better so. Wellington, when Liverpool announced to him his succession to Perceval, answered that he doubted whether the new Minister would be able to get on in the House of Commons without the aid of Canning as well as of Castlereagh. 'However,' he added characteristically, 'there is nothing like trying.' Liverpool did try, and he succeeded.

You will not expect me to follow the story further in detail. In October, 1812, Liverpool perceived that Napoleon was in desperate straits in Russia, and wrote to Wellington that in another campaign he expected to see the French driven out of Spain and the British army established in the south of France. The brilliant operations of Wellington in 1812 made things much easier in Parliament ; and the steadily increasing strength of the Government gave new confidence and

impetus to Wellington. There were of course still abundance of difficulties: subsidies to be raised, alliances to be concluded, riots at home, and America declaring war across the Atlantic; but still the tide had turned, everything was going favourably against the great enemy, and Wellington in particular was moving from strength to strength. Finally, at the end of 1813, Ministers decided to make their great effort—to raise if they possibly could 40,000 more men, chiefly from the Militia, and so bring the war to an end. What with money furnished to the Continental Powers—the sum in 1813 amounted to ten millions—and armies in the field in Holland and in North Italy as well as in the south of France, the strain upon the country was severe. But even the Opposition in Parliament had given way before the successes in all quarters, and the measures of the Government passed the Commons almost with unanimity.

But such unanimity among the coalesced Powers was less easy to maintain; and this Herculean task fell chiefly upon Castlereagh. His greatest moment came in January, 1814, when he joined the headquarters of the Allies at Basle as England's plenipotentiary. England was mistress of the situation, for she held the purse-strings; but thanks to Wellington she also enjoyed an ascendancy which was shared by no other nation, for during five years the British armies had successfully met, and latterly had routed and disgraced, the armies of France. Castlereagh was worthy to represent his country at such a time, and he worked for her as usual with perfect straightforwardness and inflexible resolution. Owing to the

divergent aims of Russia and Austria the coalition was almost at an end, and Napoleon's successes in the field did not help to heal quarrels between the contracting parties. For, you will remember, the campaign of 1814, which Wellington admired beyond all others and would never hear belittled, was the masterpiece of Napoleon and, I will venture to add, of the French soldier. With a hastily raised force of 30,000 men, nearly all of them young troops, the great master dashed from column to column of the invaders of France, dealing them buffet after buffet with a strength and rapidity which took their breath away. There is no severer trial for soldiers than to be thrown into action against one army one day, and to be led straight away to contend with another of fresh unbeaten troops to-morrow. Yet under the magic of Napoleon's leadership the gallant little French recruits went through this ordeal triumphantly, and marched and fought and fought and marched like veterans. I am perfectly confident, without any foolish national prejudice, that an equal number of our Peninsular army under Wellington's command would have smashed them to atoms; but the troops of the Continental Powers never got over their fright of Napoleon's soldiers.

Into this company of jealous potentates, scheming diplomatists, and frightened generals, Castlereagh suddenly entered; and at once all was changed. He shook up the feeble Schwarzenberg and insisted that he should go on and not draw back. He refused to give further doles to the grasping Tsar Alexander or to countenance his schemes for making Bernadotte king of France. He took Bernadotte himself to task; for the shifty Gascon, nursing foolish dreams of the French



throne, was unwilling to disgust his future subjects by contending with their troops in the field. Castlereagh would have none of this. Bernadotte must play his part with the rest. Finally, he bound the whole of the Allies together in a new alliance by the Treaty of Chaumont, which provided that, if Napoleon refused their terms, the coalesced Powers should prosecute the war with 600,000 men. They were not to make peace separately, nor to lay down their arms until their object was attained. On his own responsibility Castlereagh did not hesitate to pledge England to supply 150,000 men and a subsidy of five millions. Never was there a more fearless plenipotentiary. But the influence which Castlereagh wielded must not be attributed merely to his power of the purse. It was due to his absolute refusal to have anything to do with tricks or intrigues, in fact, to the natural ascendancy of a strong and honourable man. I like to picture to myself this simple, dignified English gentleman, without ribbon or star to detract from the natural nobility of his countenance and carriage, dominating by sheer force of character the Metternichs, the Humboldts, the Stadions and the Rasoumowskis, in spite of all their dexterity and (to use the irreverent French name) all their *crachats*. Conceive of Canning in the same position. From sheer cleverness he would have tried to beat the foreigners at their own game, and dropping at once to their level would probably have been outwitted, or at best would have gained his point by unseemly shifts. Thirty years ago even young Whigs were permitted to speak with subdued admiration of Castlereagh's conduct at the head-quarters of the Allies in 1814. I wonder how many people

remember it now. Well, it was a hundred years ago, as Mrs. Shandy said when discussing Socrates; and I suppose that one must not complain.

I said in my first lecture that the Revolution Militant had seen the most prominent of the actors in the drama perish before it. A curse seemed to rest upon the English statesmen who stood over its grave. Liverpool was struck down by paralysis at the age of fifty-seven, and lay for nearly two years a breathing corpse, sightless, speechless, senseless, until Death, having reduced him to the lowest pitch of insignificance, stepped in again, like a slovenly artisan, to finish his piece of scamped work. Castlereagh had died by his own hand five years earlier. Overstrain and overwork had worn out his brain; and it was laid upon the Duke of Wellington—who was<sup>2</sup> always selected for the most unpleasant tasks—to break the fact to him. What a mission for the man who, as Arthur Wellesley, had been brought forward by Castlereagh in the first place; had been upheld by him through all the odium of the Convention of Cintra; had been sent out by him again to Spain in 1809, and had been defended and supported by him unswervingly against calumny and detraction! ‘If I had been your brother,’ wrote Wellington to Castlereagh just after the latter’s duel with Canning, ‘you could not have been more careful of my interests than you have been in late instances, and on every occasion it has always appeared to me that you sought for opportunities to oblige me and to mark your friendship for me.’ The Duke did his duty with the merciful bluntness for which so few can find courage in such a case. ‘I feel bound to warn you,’ he said, ‘that you cannot be in your

right mind.' And poor Castlereagh buried his face in his hands and answered, 'Since you say so, I fear it must be so.' These were the last words that passed between them, for within three days Castlereagh was dead. In all history I know of no more pathetic scene than this, nor any that better exemplifies the simple strength and honesty of these two great men.

I shall not go into the years of peace that followed Waterloo, when Ministers found themselves face to face with an industrial England, which had grown up during the war, and did not know what to make of it. It is easy to blame them; and it might be justifiable, if we, after a century of experience, knew what to make of it ourselves, which unfortunately we do not. My business is only with the war against the Revolution Militant, which was conducted practically from beginning to end by Pitt and the disciples of Pitt. From time to time the Administration was leavened by Whigs, mainly by the Moderates, who practically thought with Pitt upon foreign affairs, and once only, in the Ministry of All the Talents, by the more advanced section headed by Fox and Grey. But it was Pitt and his followers who preached and upheld the policy of war to the knife until France should be reduced within her ancient limits. Indeed, after the Revolution Militant became incarnate in Napoleon, Pitt's disciples grew more inveterate in their hostility to it than was Pitt himself. The struggle had become one for existence, and of course became acuter the longer it lasted.

But, it may be asked, what right to praise after all have those who contended with the Revolution Militant? May not Pitt have been wrong; and may not Fox, who wished to live at peace with it, have been



right? The question is a fair one, and being still under debate among us, must not be lightly dismissed. The history of the Revolution falls into two periods, the destructive and the constructive; the first lasting from 1789 until 1799 under the two Assemblies, the Convention and the Directory; the second from 1799 to 1814 under the Consulate and the Empire. When once the Revolution Militant had become incarnate in Napoleon, and he had made the conquest of England his chief object, to be obtained, if need were, by the conquest of the rest of Europe, then I think that the Ministers who fought for our national existence need no defence.

But the earlier period requires fuller consideration. What was the Revolution Militant at the outset? It was an effort to enforce the acceptance of certain political principles upon all peoples, nations, and languages. Those principles were briefly embodied in the three words, Liberty, Equality, and Fraternity; or, as an alternative, *La carrière ouverte aux talents*—the tools to him who can use them—to give Carlyle's translation; and the nominal war-cry of the armies was 'War on the palace, Peace to the cottage'.

These are all high-sounding phrases, but they need not long detain us. Fraternity is a mere dream. Liberty the French Revolutionists never understood. What they did believe in and endeavour to bring about was Equality. But equality, if you think of it, is the negation of *la carrière ouverte aux talents*; for if all men are equal, why should one be preferred to another for any career? And Robespierre acted upon this principle by employing good Republicans instead of able generals for military operations. When Carnot

brought Bonaparte to his notice as a young fellow who would go far, Robespierre only remarked coldly (though with perfect truth from his own point of view), 'A very dangerous man'. A great deal is made of Napoleon's twenty-six marshals, the majority of whom rose from the ranks. But when a country is made such a hell upon earth that no young man of spirit and ability will stay in it, and the only chance of making one's fortune is to enter the ranks of the army, then it would be surprising indeed if talent were not to be found there in abundance. Never was such a chance thrown open to young fellows as in France in 1792, for practically all the existing officers had been driven from the army and there was no one to take their place. But, after all, who was the man who, from a military standpoint, saved France at first from her enemies? Captain Lazare Carnot, who had made his mark in the Royal Army. And again, what manner of figure did these marshals and other officers cut when established in the Government of the countries that they had conquered? The majority of them were shamelessly corrupt and rapacious; and Massena, the ablest military leader of all, was the very worst in this respect.

Again, if the tools were given to those who could handle them, how was it that the Government of France from 1792 until 1799 remained in the hands of impostors and scoundrels? And what, after all, did the Revolutionists effect? Nothing but destruction—destruction of very much that needed destroying, it is true, but also of much that would better have been preserved. But they could construct nothing. Even in the countries that they conquered, though they

destroyed feudalism, they imported as conquerors all the vices of their own administration; and the cry of 'War upon tyrants, Peace to the cottage' was so false that in 1799 the whole of these subject-populations, exasperated by oppression, turned as one man upon the French. These evils arose from the government of men who were not only bad but incapable; and government by such men became possible because the French made the great mistake of preferring equality to liberty. Our fathers preferred liberty to equality, and resolved to meet the crusade of the French fanatics with the right weapon—the sword.

But, it will be objected, in spite of all that Pitt and his followers could do, the doctrines of the Revolution have everywhere gained ground; and therefore he could not have been right to contest them. It is undeniably true that these doctrines have gained ground generally during the last two generations. Democracy, where it exists in Europe and in our colonies, is, I take it, built upon the theory of equality. If every man is to have a vote, obviously the reason must be that one man is as good as another. If a man has, in virtue of his property, more than one vote, this is denounced as contrary to true democratic principle, because it gives one man an advantage over another, or, in other words, offends against the doctrine of equality. Of course all men are not equal, never have been, and never will be; and therefore the tendency is to compel them to be equal. If a man is strong enough to work for longer hours than his fellows, he must be forbidden to do so. If he has skill enough to do more work—say, to lay more bricks—than his fellows within a given time, then he must be restrained



from doing so under penalties which, if not actually statutory, are upheld by statute. Lastly, we and some of our colonies are certainly progressing along the road to the French form of equality, which is defined by so judicial a writer as Lord Acton to be government by the poor and payment by the rich.

'The great inlet by which a colour for oppression has entered into the world,' wrote Burke, 'is by one man's pretending to determine concerning the happiness of another.' Liberty is a word very difficult to define; but a worse definition might be found for it than exemption from the attempts of others to determine our happiness. If we look into our statute-book we find that in past times it was considered to be the chief function of government to make such attempts. Compulsion was exerted to make men godly, to make them think alike, to make them sell goods at a certain fixed rate, and in brief to do a variety of things which the Government thought it better that they should do. These experiments were made in all good faith and in acquittal of the law-givers' consciences; yet somehow they were unsuccessful. Indeed it is now customary to call them by hard names. To compel all men to conform to certain religious opinions or observances, under legal penalties, is now styled persecution; and those who suffer for persisting in their right to hold other opinions or follow other observances are termed martyrs. Rightly and naturally we hold such martyrs in honour, and are thankful to them for delivering us from the suffering, the sorrow, and the degradation which they had to endure.

Now it is certain that without compulsion men will do very little, and that with compulsion they will do but

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little more. It is beyond question good for men to be cleanly in their persons and in their dwellings; yet it is with difficulty that they can be made to keep their houses clean, while, as to their persons, it is hopeless to attempt it. Again, to judge by the records of small-pox, it is good for men to be vaccinated; yet we have abandoned the effort to compel them as impracticable. Nevertheless we are adopting the doctrine of equality as accepted by the French Revolution; and, since equality does not naturally exist among men, it is to be created and compelled by law. Government by the poor and payment by the rich! The poor, broadly speaking, but of course with many individual exceptions, are, I conceive, the unsuccessful and the offspring of the unsuccessful. The rich, subject to the same reservation, are, I imagine, the successful and the offspring of the successful. Of course, a certain number of rich and poor are always changing places, but, broadly speaking, this I take to be the main distinction between them. And what are the causes that make men successful in this world? Surely physical or intellectual ability, or both combined; qualities which all experience shows to be heritable, but which no law of equality can confer. The rich, therefore, must be presumed as a body to be abler than the poor; and the poor, as a body, less able than the rich. Yet the less able are to govern the more able, whose function it will be to pay all expenses. Can any sane man believe that such a system will endure? It may be tried, but it is bound to fail, because it is founded on a lie.

It was against this lie, primarily, that Pitt and his disciples fought strenuously and implacably for more

than twenty years. France, in fact, attempted a great persecution ; and England resisted it. Pitt is honoured among us at least for the courage, sagacity, and wisdom which he displayed during the nine years of his administration in time of peace ; but for his resolute hostility to the doctrines of the Revolution he is still severely blamed, while Castlereagh, Perceval, and Liverpool are sneered away as mere narrow-minded reactionaries. Personally, when I think of the tremendous odds against which the three last stood up with unshakable firmness, I am lost in admiration. The old ground of conflict was changed ; but the enemy was infinitely more formidable. On the one side was Napoleon, an autocrat vested with such power as great genius and good fortune have rarely placed in the hands of one man, with the resources of half of Europe in his hand, and an armed force, unsurpassed in skill and devotion, ready to march to the ends of the earth to uphold his will. On the other was a plain English gentleman, with not so much as a force of police at his back ; with a population by nature five times as turbulent as it is now, and in the manufacturing districts inflamed alike by revolutionary teaching and by real distress ; with an Ireland perilously near to revolt, but wanting a constabulary ; and lastly with a House of Commons, unreformed indeed, but not upon that account containing a less factious, mischievous, and obstructive Opposition than any other House of Commons during a great war. And in the face of all these difficulties he had not only to conduct the ordinary business of government, but to raise armies, man fleets, construct and pursue a military policy, and be unsuccessful at his peril. Napoleon could lose whole armies with impunity. He lost one



in Egypt, another in St. Domingo, and a third, thrice as big as the other two put together, in Russia; and yet he did not hesitate to order levies amounting in all to 1,300,000 men in 1813. Five thousand British troops beaten and captured would have brought any British Minister's head perilously near to the block. Such were the difficulties that confronted Perceval, Liverpool, and Castlereagh; yet for their country's sake they encountered them without flinching. But they are to be decried because they strove against the 'spirit of the age' and loathed the thought of democracy.

2 Now democracy at best is only an experiment, which if conducted upon false principles must inevitably break down. And may not the spirit of the age be a lying spirit; or rather is it possible among such beings as ourselves that it should ever be a wholly true spirit? Why should it be accepted as synonymous with Reason, and acclaimed as infallible? If *vox populi* were *vox dei*, we should long ago have ascertained truths after which we still grope in vain. If the spirit of the age dictates that the wise and the foolish, the weak and the strong, the able and the incapable are for political purposes all alike, might not the shades of Liverpool, Perceval, and Castlereagh say, 'This is a lying spirit, and we shall resist it. You blame us for not removing Catholic disabilities. Were not these very disabilities imposed likewise in obedience to the spirit of the age; and yet you say it was a false spirit. Why should this new spirit be any more true?' I picture to myself the tiny Perceval putting the question with his usual beaming good temper. I see the noble figure of Castlereagh listen-

ing, stately and courteous, with his grandest manner, for the answer; and Liverpool, in his suit of black, waiting likewise, his hands before him, and his troubled expression tending towards the ghost of a smile. And then they draw back respectfully, as a tall gaunt figure strides forward with nose in air, and eyes flashing with eager scorn. And I think that I see the critic's countenance fall as Perceval says with gentle malice, 'Perhaps, Sir, you will be good enough to continue the argument with Mr. Pitt.'

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